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THE INTIMATE PAPERS OF  
COLONEL HOUSE



INTO THE WORLD WAR

APRIL, 1917 — JUNE, 1918

*'The most urgent problem we have to solve is how . . . Governments set at opposite ends of the world can effect the close coöperation which is undoubtedly necessary if the war is to be quickly and successfully ended.'*

SIR WILLIAM WISEMAN TO COLONEL HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 26, 1917









*President Wilson and Colonel House  
September 1917*

# THE INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE



*Into the World War*

Arranged as a Narrative

BY

CHARLES SEYMOUR

*Provost and Sterling Professor of History, Yale University*



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## PREFACE

THE two concluding volumes of *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* begin with the entrance of the United States into the World War and end with Colonel House's attempt to secure some compromise on the basis of which the Senate might ratify the Versailles Treaty, including the Covenant of the League of Nations. Their central theme is American participation in the war and the Peace Conference, in so far as the papers of Colonel House shed light on the American effort and Wilsonian policies. Readers of the two preceding volumes will remember that Colonel House, although not an officeholder, occupied a special position in relation to Wilson's administration at the time the United States became a belligerent. He had been chosen by the President as his personal representative and sent on three separate missions to the European Governments in 1914 and the two following years. As Wilson's representative he had come in close contact with European leaders during the period of American neutrality.

It was natural that, during the war, President Wilson should look to House for advice on every matter that touched American relations with the Allies and especially on all problems of war aims. He selected him as chief of the organization for preparing the American case at the Peace Conference, appointed him head of the American War Mission to Europe for the coördination of military and industrial efforts, asked him to draft a constitution for a league of nations, and again sent him to Europe as American representative on the Supreme War Council when it arranged the armistice with Germany. At the Peace Conference, House was Commissioner Plenipotentiary, and, because of his intimate personal relations with European statesmen, was constantly

used by the President to conduct the most delicate negotiations. During Wilson's absence from Paris and his illness, the President selected him to take his place on the Supreme Council.

In view of the position held by House and the care with which he and his secretary, Miss Denton, preserved all letters and memoranda, it is obvious that his papers, including the diary which he never failed to keep, provide historical material of the utmost value. The reader of these volumes, however, should be especially on his guard against two misconceptions. The papers here published represent a very small proportion of the large collection which Colonel House deposited in the Library of Yale University. If any attempt had been made to reproduce the substance of the numerous and complicated problems which were brought to House's attention — diplomatic, naval, military, economic — and upon which lengthy memoranda were written, the book would have been extended into a whole library of volumes. Exigencies of space have compelled omission of reference to all but the most significant problems. Even in the case of the most vital subjects the extracts from letters, cables, and diary deal largely in generalities. This is partly due to the fact that neither House nor any single individual could himself have gone deeply into the purely technical matters involved in the complex problems of the war; the function of Colonel House was essentially that of a diplomat, seeing that the right people got together to work out these problems. On the other hand, it has been necessary to omit numerous technical memoranda which, if published, would effectively disprove the assumption that his work was in any sense superficial.

It is equally important for the reader to remember that, despite the range of House's activities, these volumes are not intended to constitute a history of the American effort in the war. They are not, in fact, published as history, but as the

raw material for history. Their purpose is not to convey any definite historical conclusion nor to enforce any historical judgment, but rather to show what Colonel House did and how he came to do it. It is for the historian of the future to determine where he and others were right and where wrong. The papers are presented for what they are worth, unchanged, as they were written. They are presented with emphasis upon House's own point of view, for otherwise they would not be intelligible, but always with the realization that the historian may take another point of view. Furthermore the reader should bear in mind that these volumes concern Colonel House and are not intended to describe the activities of others except where they happened to touch his own. Colonel House is the central figure in the book, not because of any desire to overemphasize the importance of the political rôle he played, but simply because the book is based upon his papers. If all those closely connected with the administration of President Wilson would tell the story of their own activities, following the example of Secretary Lansing and Secretary Houston, the scholars who ultimately write the definitive history of the time would find their task greatly facilitated.

C. S.

YALE UNIVERSITY  
*August, 1928*





## NOTE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

EVERY effort has been made to check the accuracy of Colonel House's papers by comparison with those of the statesmen with whom he was in correspondence. Each account of an important conversation recorded in the diary has been laid before those with whom he was in conference wherever they survive, and full opportunity has been given for comment in case of misunderstanding. It has also seemed wise to publish at length the letters and cables of British and French statesmen, whenever they are necessary to an explanation of the nature of House's activities. In these volumes, as in the two preceding, care has been taken to secure complete authority for the publication of every letter and memorandum.

I am deeply indebted to those who, by granting permission for the publication of documents and, in some cases, by adding their own comments, have increased the historical value of the volumes and made possible a complete picture of the work of Colonel House. I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Sir William Tyrrell, the Marquess of Reading, the Earl of Balfour, Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Eric Drummond, Sir Horace Plunkett, the literary executors of Lord Northcliffe, Sir George Sutton, Mr. Montague Ellis, Sir Campbell Stuart, M. Georges Clemenceau, Ambassador Jusserand, Marshal Pétain, M. André Tardieu, M. André Chéradame, M. Ignace Paderewski, Ambassador Aimaro Sato, Ambassador Boris Bakhmetieff, Mr. Carl W. Ackerman, President E. A. Alderman, Admiral W. S. Benson, General Tasker H. Bliss, Mr. Stephen Bonsal, Dr. Isaiah Bowman, Mr. Arthur Bullard, Mrs. Frank I. Cobb, Mr. Paul Cravath, Mr. A. H.

Frazier, Attorney-General Thomas W. Gregory, Professor Douglas Johnson, Secretary Robert Lansing, Mr. Walter Lippmann, Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge 3rd, President A. Lawrence Lowell, Mr. Thomas Nelson Perkins, Senator Elihu Root, Mr. Lincoln Steffens, Mr. Karl von Weigand. In this respect I am most of all indebted to Sir William Wiseman, who as chief of the British intelligence service in Washington acted as liaison officer between Colonel House and the British during the war; he has not only put his valuable collection of papers at my service, but has taken infinite pains to clarify doubtful points by himself writing memoranda based upon his wartime records. Without such assistance the story of the work of Colonel House would have been incomplete and confused.

I am particularly grateful to those who have read and criticized all or parts of the manuscript. Responsibility for the final form of the volumes rests upon my shoulders entirely; but the number of errors and infelicities would have been vastly increased except for the suggestions of the following: Mr. Gordon Auchincloss, Mr. Ackerman, Mr. Bonsal, Dr. Bowman, Mr. Frazier, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Breckinridge Long, Mr. J. J. Lyons, Professor Douglas Johnson, President S. E. Mezes, Mr. David Hunter Miller, Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine, Sir Horace Plunkett, Mr. A. D. Howden Smith, Sir Campbell Stuart, Mr. Henry Wickham Steed, Ambassador Brand Whitlock, Mr. Robert W. Woolley.

To Mr. Andrew Keogh and the authorities of the Yale University Library I am indebted for the care of the House Collection, and to Miss Frances B. Denton for invaluable assistance in the arrangement and elucidation of documents. The completion of these volumes would have been impossible except for the untiring labor of Miss Helen M. Reynolds, assistant to the curator of the House Collection, upon whose close familiarity with the documents and judgment in their use I have been constantly dependent both in the construc-



tion and the revision of the manuscript. Finally, if there is any merit in the literary form of the book, credit must be assigned to the suggestions and criticism of my wife, who has read and re-read every page of the manuscript and proof.

C. S.

YALE UNIVERSITY

*August, 1928*



# CONTENTS

I. INTO THE WORLD WAR	1
Wilson and the declaration of war on Germany — The military crisis of the spring of 1917, as reflected in Colonel House's papers — Discouraging symptoms in France — Conditions in Germany — Wilson and the American war organization — The activities and contacts of Colonel House — Food and shipbuilding problems — House's relations with Allied envoys.	
II. THE BALFOUR MISSION	29
The problem of American coöperation in the war — American attitude toward the Allies — First suggestion of the Balfour Mission — Arrival of Balfour and conference with House; problem of war aims — Conferences in Washington — Discussion of secret treaties by Balfour and House — House's account of Wilson-Balfour conference — Wilson's knowledge of the Treaty of London — House's conference with Joffre — Further discussions of war aims with Balfour and Drummond.	
III. TARDIEU AND NORTHCLIFFE	64
Means of communication between House and British diplomats — His correspondence with Balfour regarding naval agreement — Wilson's attitude on postponement of American capital ship programme — Disagreement between House and Wilson over naval policy — House's relations with Sir Horace Plunkett — Sir Horace on the Irish Convention — The Tardieu Mission — Problems of coördination — The Northcliffe Mission — Relations of Northcliffe and House — Activities and accomplishments of Northcliffe in the United States — Northcliffe's cables dealing with war problems in America.	
IV. FINANCE AND SUPPLIES	96
House's relation to financial problems — Financial situation of the Allies in the summer of 1917 — Appeals for American credits — British anxiety over loans carried by J. P. Morgan and Company and other banks — Northcliffe's presentation of Allied needs — Confusion in demands of the Allies — Mr. McAdoo's plan for an inter-allied council of coördination — Northcliffe and House suggest that Lord Reading be sent to America as financial commissioner — Request of British Foreign Office for House's advice — Reading accepts Mission — Purchasing Agreement of August — Results of Reading appointment.	

V. WAR AIMS AND PROPAGANDA	125
Attempts to drive a wedge between German Government and people — Colonel House on situation in Germany — Urges encouragement to German liberals — Letters to Wilson regarding speech on war aims — Wilson's Flag Day Speech — House's interest in propaganda — Northcliffe's report — Plans for open debate on War Aims between <i>New York World</i> and <i>Berliner Tageblatt</i> — Correspondence with Frank Cobb — Objections of President Wilson.	
VI. THE POPE'S PEACE PROPOSAL	149
Movement for peace of compromise in Austria and Germany — Czernin and the Reichstag resolution — Balfour reports receipt of the Pope's peace proposal and asks for Wilson's views — Colonel House on the proposal — Wilson's reply to Balfour — House's letters to Wilson, urging firm but liberal response — Views of Russian Ambassador — Views of Ambassador Jusserand — Wilson-House correspondence regarding response to the Pope's proposal — Wilson plans definite formulation of American peace programme — Asks House to gather and organize data for the peace conference — 'The Inquiry.'	
VII. AN AMERICAN WAR MISSION	174
Wilson's visit to House at Magnolia in September — Arrival of Reading — His efforts in behalf of coördination — Reading memorandum on supplies — His suggestion of an American War Mission in Europe — Lloyd George and problems of military strategy; his desire for an American representative in Europe — Problems of tonnage — Balfour's cable to House regarding shipping losses — Colonel House chosen to head American Mission — Wiseman memorandum on decision to send War Mission — Purposes of the Mission — Conferences in Washington — Departure of the Mission — Arrival in London.	
VIII. CONFERENCES IN LONDON	210
Crisis in Allied fortunes: Caporetto and the Bolshevik Revolution — Lloyd George's plan for a Supreme War Council — The Rapallo Agreement — Advent of Clemenceau Ministry — Parliamentary crisis in Great Britain — Lloyd George and House — House urges Wilson to act in concert with Allies — Wilson's approval of Supreme War Council — House's report to Wilson on British	



crisis — Conferences with Balfour, Drummond, Cecil, Bonar Law, Robertson, Grey, Smuts, Cambon, French, Lansdowne, Geddes, Venizelos, Jellicoe — Discussion regarding peace terms with Lloyd George and Balfour — Efforts to achieve coördination in technical problems — Northcliffe's assistance — Conferences between American Mission and British War Cabinet — Lloyd George's statement of Allied needs.

## IX. THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL247

Nature of the conferences at Paris — Arrival of the American Mission — Drawbacks of Rapallo Agreement — House's reports to Wilson — Bliss-House memorandum on military unity — Conference with Clemenceau and Pétain — Arrival of British — Lloyd George, after conference with House, refuses to alter Rapallo Agreement — The Interallied Conference — Meeting of Supreme War Council — Resolutions passed — Discussions of peace negotiations — Lloyd George anxious to probe Austrian possibilities — House's efforts to persuade Allies to meet German and Russian situations with joint statement of war aims — Wilson's approval of his resolution — Opposition of Sonnino.

## X. THE ADJUSTMENT OF EFFORT291

Final session of Interallied Conference at Paris — House's opinion of its accomplishments — Cravath upon the need of coördinated effort — New interallied machinery — Reports of American technical representatives — Secret reports of Colonel House, Admiral Benson, General Bliss — Return of American Mission to the United States — House's first conference with Wilson — Anxiety of Allies regarding American aid — Messages from Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Tardieu — Crisis in American war organization — Tardieu upon the final result.

## XI. THE FOURTEEN POINTS316

Failure of Paris Conference to achieve joint programme of war aims — House urges Wilson to formulate war aims in a public address — Report of the Inquiry upon war aims — House visits Wilson to discuss proposed address — Its essential purpose — House's diary record of Wilson's drafting of the Fourteen Points, January 5, 1918 — Particular difficulties: Freedom of the Seas; Alsace-Lorraine; Russia; the Balkans — Lloyd George's speech of January 5 — Interchange of cables between

Balfour and House — Delivery of the Fourteen Points speech — Reactions in the United States, Great Britain, France — Failure of the immediate purpose of the speech — Ultimate importance.

## XII. RUMORS OF PEACE

350

Withdrawal of Russia from the war — Brest-Litovsk negotiations — Industrial unrest in Austria and Germany — Replies of Czernin and Hertling to Wilson's Fourteen Points — Ackerman report on political situation in Central Powers — Gilbert Murray on ideal peace — Difficulties involved in uniting Allies in common programme — Supreme War Council statement — Wilson's irritation — He prepares an answer to Hertling and Czernin — Conferences with House — Wilson's speech of February 4 — Austrian peace overtures — Peace offer of the Emperor Karl — Balfour's cable to House regarding peace proposals — Smuts-Mensdorff conversations — Czernin's memorandum — Failure of peace propositions.

## XIII. THE RUSSIAN ENIGMA

386

Effects of Russian Revolution — Proposed Japanese intervention in Siberia — Balfour's cable to House — Wilson and House opposed to intervention — House's explanation to Balfour — The Allies press for interallied intervention in Russia — Bolshevik policy — Reading's estimate of situation — House's plan of economic relief mission to Russia — Wilson unwillingly agrees to interallied intervention — State Department's declaration of purpose of expedition.

## XIV. FORCE WITHOUT STINT OR LIMIT

423

Effects of Brest-Litovsk peace — Austro-German military treaty — Wilson's change of tactics: discusses with House an address emphasizing will to victory — The speech of April 6 — Allied plea for incorporation of American troops in Allied armies — Wilson's attitude — Balfour's cable to House on Allied needs — The March crisis — Renewed demand for American troops — House-Balfour interchange of cables — Request from Lloyd George that House attend Supreme War Council — Arrangement with Allies negotiated by Pershing — Optimism of Colonel House.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

PRESIDENT WILSON AND COLONEL HOUSE, SEPTEMBER, 1917	<i>Photogravure frontispiece</i>
SIR WILLIAM WISEMAN Photograph with inscription	30
ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR (NOW EARL OF BALFOUR) Photograph with inscription	56
ANDRÉ TARDIEU Photograph with inscription	78
PRESIDENT WILSON AND COLONEL HOUSE	100
LORD READING Photograph with inscription	122
LORD ROBERT CECIL (NOW VISCOUNT CECIL) Photograph with inscription	166
DAVID LLOYD GEORGE With autograph	186
PRESIDENT WILSON'S LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTERS COMMISSIONING COLONEL HOUSE TO REPRESENT HIM IN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE	206
DRAWING-ROOM, CHESTERFIELD HOUSE	226
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE MISSION, NOVEMBER AND DE- CEMBER, 1917	226
GENERAL TASKER H. BLISS Photograph with inscription	254
ADMIRAL BENSON Photograph with inscription	298
MARSHAL FOCH Photograph with inscription	308
WILSON'S DRAFT OF POINT XI OF THE FOURTEEN POINTS, WITH VESNITCH'S NOTATION	334

WICKHAM STEED	374
Photograph with inscription	
ROBERT LANSING	396
FRANK L. POLK	396
ARTHUR HUGH FRAZIER	396
BRAND WHITLOCK	396
SIDNEY E. MEZES	396
GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING	430
Photograph with inscription	



THE INTIMATE PAPERS OF  
COLONEL HOUSE



# THE INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

APRIL, 1917 — JUNE, 1918

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## CHAPTER I INTO THE WORLD WAR

When the President turned from peace to war, he did it with the same resolute purpose. . . .

*Colonel House to Lord Bryce, June 10, 1917*

### I

‘THE day has come,’ said President Wilson to Congress on April 2, 1917, ‘when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.’ With these words he launched the United States on what he regarded as a crusade for a new international order; a ‘steadfast concert for peace’ that should guarantee the ‘rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience.’ With equal force he revealed his conviction that only through the overthrow of the military masters of Germany could the object be attained. ‘We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretense about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples.’

It was a deep gulf that separated the Wilson of January, when he told House that ‘there will be no war,’ and the Wilson of April, when he asked Congress for a declaration. The bridge was not easy to cross and the new path would

## 2 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

not have been chosen except that he saw on the other side not so much a military triumph and the chastisement of an enemy as the vision of a new international structure in the creation of which the United States might take the lead. The German leaders themselves, by the inauguration of the ruthless submarine warfare, convinced him that no other course was possible. 'From that time henceforward,' wrote the German Ambassador, 'he regarded the Imperial Government as morally condemned.'<sup>1</sup>

President Wilson was determined, once the bridge was crossed, to wage war with the utmost vigor. By temperament and conviction he was likely to be as dogged in his resolve to administer a complete defeat to Germany as he had been slow to resign the policy of neutrality. 'When the President turned from Peace to War,' wrote Colonel House to Lord Bryce, 'he did it with the same resolute purpose that has always guided him.'<sup>2</sup> This determination was fortified by an increasing realization that hopes of a speedy victory were not likely to be fulfilled. Many months of intense effort would be necessary before the United States could bring active military assistance to the Allies. In the meantime fortune seemed to turn towards Germany.

On the Western Front the carefully laid plans for continuing the Somme offensive were disturbed by a change in the Allied command, resulting in the defeat of General Nivelle on the Chemin des Dames in April. A crisis of war-weariness followed in France. For the remainder of the year French armies, undergoing a moral and material reorganization under General Pétain, were unable to attempt any major offensive. In the East, the Russian revolution of March led to the crumbling of all organization, whether economic or military. The dissolving of the ideal and forms of discipline had its inevitable effects. Behind the lines the spirit of chaos

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, *My Three Years in America*, 385.

<sup>2</sup> House to Bryce, June 10, 1917.



penetrated the economic life of Russia, at the same time that it attacked the army and navy. No longer could the Allies count on help from the colossus of the East which had proved of such avail in 1914 and 1916.

While events on the two main fighting fronts thus rescued Germany from the defeat that seemed to be impending after the Battle of the Somme, she launched the submarine attack upon which her leaders had gambled to achieve positive victory. 'At the time it was a gamble perhaps — but not a wild one.'<sup>1</sup> Great Britain had become the mainstay of the Entente; her troops must take up the offensive during the period that Pétain had to spend in nursing his armies back to vigor; her munitions, her tonnage, her financial credit had become critical factors in a war that would be decided by the side with most reserves. France had borne the brunt of the great German attacks of 1914 and 1916; it was now the turn of the British. Thus there was much to encourage the Germans in their hope that if the submarine could isolate England and destroy her mercantile marine, they would end the war victoriously. And if the success of the intensive submarine campaign after three months was less than had been promised, it was sufficient to bring the British and the Entente as a whole into very real peril.

'The whole war effort of the Allies was soon threatened with disaster' writes the Chairman of the Allied Maritime Transport Executive, 'and all the main European Allies were in imminent danger of starvation. . . . The opening success of the new campaign was staggering. In the first three months 470 ocean-going ships (including all classes of ships the total was 1000) had been sunk. In a single fortnight in April 122 ocean-going vessels were lost. The rate of the British loss in ocean-going tonnage during this fortnight was equivalent to an average round voyage loss of 25

<sup>1</sup> Salter, *Allied Shipping Control*, 121.

#### 4 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

per cent — one out of every four ships leaving the United Kingdom for an overseas voyage was being lost before its return. The continuance of this rate of loss would have brought disaster upon all the Allied campaigns, and might well have involved an unconditional surrender.’<sup>1</sup>

Just as vital to Allied success as British tonnage was the maintenance of British credit, which in the two preceding years had, to a large extent, been providing for the purchasing of necessary supplies for the Entente. British gold and credit had paid for the mass of food supplies, munitions, and various manufactured products which the United States exported to the Allied countries; Great Britain not merely financed its own war trade but advanced large credits to France and Italy and the smaller Allies. But the spring of 1917 brought British finance to the verge of collapse. British balances in the United States were at the point of exhaustion. Without immediate financial assistance from the United States Government it seemed certain that trade between America and the Allies would cease, the war needs of the Allies could not be met, and Allied credit would collapse. Mr. Balfour, who in a long career had always been careful to avoid exaggeration, stated definitely that ‘a calamity’ was impending.<sup>2</sup>

#### II

Thus the United States entered the war at a moment when the fortunes of the Entente, military, economic, and political, were depressed to an extent that was appreciated by very few in the United States and not many more in Europe. President Wilson’s war speech of April 2 had been received throughout the country with a sort of sober gladness; his long-stretched patience had convinced all but a handful that

<sup>1</sup> Salter, *op. cit.*, 77, 121.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Balfour’s reference was to the difficult financial situation.

participation in the war was forced upon us; the Nation was instilled with the desire to contribute everything possible to German defeat. But there was a general impression that Germany was on its last legs, little suspicion that defeat and victory were still being weighed in the balance, hardly a guess that if the effort of America was to count it must be tremendous and immediate.

Even those Americans whose sources of information were numerous and authoritative only gradually came to appreciate how serious the situation was from the Allied point of view. This was not surprising when we consider that the extent of the war was so vast that no one person in Europe had a bird's-eye survey, and it was only as the news of the various sorts of reverses, military and political, drifted in that the character of the Allied problem became clear.

Colonel House's papers, containing a multitude of letters and reports from Europe, reflect the increasing realization of the need of American aid. In February they are colored by the jubilation of the Entente over the dismissal of Bernstorff and the prospect of American participation. A letter from Lord Bryce to House, of February 16, suggested indeed that in the event America entered the war 'a small number' of United States troops should be sent to the front; but Bryce obviously had in mind the moral rather than the military effect and he spoke of the 'already dispirited Germans.' Early in March, however, House recorded a conversation with a friend 'who had recently returned from England and presents a dismal story. . . . It is important because he is one of General Lord French's closest friends and he probably reflects French's opinion.'

House himself, after the diplomatic rupture with Germany but before our formal entrance into the war, was evidently not in favor of a large American expeditionary force. He agreed with Wilson's insistence upon the most complete industrial organization that might be necessary to consolidate



the full strength of the United States against Germany; but he feared that the attempt to create for ourselves a complete military machine and the desire to figure upon the scene of battle would divert energy from the less spectacular but more essential task of aiding the Allies in the manner they most desired. This was evidently in his mind when he wrote to the President a fortnight before the declaration of a state of war.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, *March 19, 1917*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Captain Gherardi, our Naval Attaché at Berlin, who returned *via* Paris, tells me that the French Admiralty and officers in the French Army told him that France badly needed steel billets, coal and other raw materials. They also told him that this war would be won by the nations whose morale lasted longest.

They estimated that the morale of the French troops was lifted 25 per cent when the United States broke with Germany.

The strain upon the English to furnish materials for Russia, France and Italy has been so great that they are now unable to recruit for the army any further.

Everybody I have talked to connected with the English and French Governments tells me that if we intend to help defeat Germany it will be necessary for us to begin immediately to furnish the things the Allies are lacking.

It has seemed to me that we should constitute ourselves a huge reservoir to supply the Allies with the things they most need. No one looks with favor upon our raising a large army at the moment, believing it would be better if we would permit volunteers to enlist in the Allied armies.

It seems to me that we can no longer shut our eyes to the fact that we are already in the war and that if we will indicate

our purpose to throw all our resources against Germany it is bound to break their morale and bring the war to an earlier close.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Colonel House's opinion that it would be misdirected effort to build a large American army was doubtless that of many Americans at this period.<sup>1</sup> That he was wrong became obvious after the events of the spring indicated the complete failure of the French offensive and the collapse of Russia's military strength. House himself changed his mind as reports of the increasing danger came in. Of these the most persuasive were sent to him, for the President's information, by his friend Mr. Arthur Hugh Frazier, Counsellor of the American Embassy in Paris. The reports were based upon what Mr. Frazier described as 'most confidential information . . . furnished by the French War Office.' In his opinion it was 'evident that the so-called information on this subject which is published in the public press is very inaccurate and altogether too optimistic.'

The French memoranda painted the situation in gloomy tints, perhaps the more effectively to emphasize the need of immediate assistance. But there was no escaping the statistics regarding the relative man-power of France and Germany, nor the conclusion of the French War Office that after some thousand days of war Germany still possessed, in the military and political sense, a powerful machine: strong in men and materials of war, strong in its solidarity.

'It results,' a supplementary memorandum from Mr. Frazier added, 'that after almost three years of war the

<sup>1</sup> This opinion was shared by many persons abroad. André Tardieu writes (*France and America*, 218): 'Every one looked upon the United States as a vast reservoir from which European forces and supplies could be fed. No one believed it capable of creating a new army to be added to those already in line. Every one believed it would be dangerous to make the attempt.'



Allies see themselves reduced by circumstances for a certain period longer, to a most disheartening inertia. The French people sorely tried by the privations and losses of a great war have before them several months of suffering without, as far as Europe is concerned, the stimulating hope of an encouraging event to help them bear up, and necessarily their minds will turn toward interior difficulties. The moment to be passed is rather critical. In such a juncture . . . it is deemed most important by the French that the United States should *immediately* send an important army to Europe. As for the Germans who universally believe that America's land participation in the war will be limited to sending money and supplies to the Allies, the arrival of an American army on the Western Front could but dismay this people already beginning surely to suffer from a fatigue due to a long war. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

The attitude which President Wilson assumed towards American coöperation was that in all large questions the United States must be guided by the experience which the Allies had gained in almost three years of fighting. If they wanted an expeditionary force for its moral or its material value, he believed the United States should send it. That the man-power as well as the munitions of America might ultimately become necessary to Allied victory was a conclusion naturally to be drawn from the increasing indications of the Russian collapse. In mid-May House received the report of an American agent in Germany, forwarded to him by Maurice Egan, American Minister at Copenhagen.

*Report on Conditions in Germany*

'Russia is regarded as being eliminated from a military standpoint for this year. There is an enormous [German] reserve army in the West, the largest reserve army which

<sup>1</sup> On April 8, Norman Hapgood cabled House that Nivelle and Painlevé 'plead privately for Americans in small groups for French army. Say would mean salvation.'

Germany has had at any time during the war. Officers and men from the Eastern Front, with whom I talked, told me that the Russians and Germans fraternize freely between the lines. The quiet in the East has enabled Germany to concentrate all munitions for the West.

‘The strong depression in Germany two months ago has been effaced by the U-boat successes as published in Germany. Not in a year has confidence been so rockbound as at present. . . .

‘The food situation is better than I expected to find it. The next eight weeks will see it at its very worst, but Russian chaos, U-boat successes, failure of the French and British to get through in West, strengthens the people’s fortitude, and there is much less complaint than I expected. . . .

‘Military circles regard America’s entrance as an admission on the part of England that she cannot defeat Germany, [has] thereby abdicated her leadership against Germany, and that the war now really is between Germany and America. . . .’

From London Charles Grasty, whose repute as a journalist secured for him numerous personal contacts and sources of information, wrote to House that while the English were ‘more confident than ever,’ the London newspaper offices were convinced that the new Government in Russia was composed of a ‘thoroughly corrupt set of grafters.’ The French, he said, were on their ‘last legs’ when the United States entered the war, and the friction between political and military elements still clouded hope.

A month later House regarded the European situation with extreme disquiet. The British Foreign Office had just sent him an urgent cable, explaining the acute financial crisis and the need of immediate help. He recorded in his diary on the last day of June that the ‘panicky cable which came to me yesterday is alarming.

## 10 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

‘I see evidences of all the belligerents weakening, and the cracking process being actively at work. My letters from France indicate that the condition there is serious, and it is a question whether they will be able to hold out during the year. Great Britain I have counted upon but if she is going to pieces financially because certain funds are not given her, or certain debts paid, the situation is not reassuring.’

### III

A few years after the close of the war Colonel House wrote that ‘no matter how discouraging the situation might appear at any particular moment, my belief in ultimate success never wavered, and chiefly because of my perfect confidence in Wilson’s capacity for popular leadership.’ That quality the President never displayed more effectively than at the very moment of our entrance into the war, when he impressed upon the nation that each citizen was essentially a soldier: thereby he evoked not merely enthusiasm, but a willingness to submit to organized discipline which was scarcely to be expected from so individualistic a people.

‘In the sense in which we have been wont to think of armies,’ said Wilson, ‘there are no armies in this struggle, there are entire nations armed. . . . A nation needs all men; but it needs each man, not in the field that will most pleasure him, but in the endeavor that will best serve the common good. Thus, though a sharpshooter pleases to operate a trip-hammer for the forging of great guns and an expert machinist desires to march with the flag, the nation is being served only when the sharpshooter marches and the machinist remains at his levers. The whole nation must be a team, in which each man shall play the part for which he is best fitted.’<sup>1</sup>

It was not the least of the triumphs of the United States that the Nation was made to feel itself part of the fighting

<sup>1</sup> Proclamation of the Selective Draft Act, May 18, 1917.



forces and coöperated enthusiastically in the organization of the national resources. The process was inevitably of an emergency character, for the United States possessed no bureaucratic system comparable to those of Europe, which could immediately begin the necessary task of coördinating the national industries for the supply of the army. Every firm in every line of production was competing in the manufacture of essential and unessential articles, in transportation, in bidding for and holding the necessary labor. The army itself was decentralized, did not form or state its requirements as one body, but through five supplies bureaus which acted independently and in competition with each other. Bids for materials from the different bureaus conflicted with each other, with those of the navy, and of the Allies. From this chaos order must be evolved before the United States could bring effective assistance to Europe, and in the nature of things it was many months before the necessary centralization was secured, whether in the strictly military sphere through the General Staff or in the industrial through the War Industries Board.

Characteristically the President avoided the creating of new machinery so far as possible. He believed always in evolution rather than in revolution. It was this tendency and not mere partisanship which led him to refuse the demand for a coalition cabinet which should include members of the Republican Party. As a student of politics he had never had any confidence in the efficiency of coalition government, and he assumed that the demand was based upon selfish motives.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, President Wilson was determined to keep partisan politics out of the war organization. He told House in February that so far as the foreign service was concerned he would not permit party affiliations to have any influence upon the selection of candidates, and he was

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, February 12, 1917.

## 12 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

mind to apply the same principle to war appointments. Colonel House was entirely of the same mind and did all that he could to harmonize the differences between the Republicans and the Democrats. He discussed the organization of the House of Representatives with Mr. Willcox, Chairman of the Republican Committee.<sup>1</sup> In March he wrote the President that the British Ambassador reported that Senator Lodge had 'expressed a desire to coöperate with you in the future and Sir Cecil thinks if you will meet him halfway, this can be brought about. If you get Lodge it will probably mean the other Republican Senators upon the [Foreign Relations] Committee.'<sup>2</sup> A few weeks later: 'I am glad that you saw Roosevelt. I hope that you will send for Lodge also. It looks as if you would have to depend largely upon Republican support to carry through your war measures. Did you see the admirable speech that Root made last night at the Republican Club?'<sup>3</sup>

As it turned out, personal coöperation between the members of the Administration and the Republican leaders was never very cordial, although partisan issues were by common consent excluded from Congressional debates. But President Wilson, in his appointments to the new war boards, to military and civil positions of the first importance, made his choice without regard to political factors and probably in general without knowing what might be the party affiliations of the appointees. So much was certainly true in the cases of such men as Pershing, Sims, Hoover, Goethals, Schwab, Davison. It is true that neither Colonel Roosevelt nor General Wood was given a command in France; but the evidence is overwhelming that in each case the decision was not made by the President but by the military experts of the General Staff.

<sup>1</sup> House to Wilson, March 30, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> House to Wilson, March 14, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> House to Wilson, April 10, 1917.



In this new war organization Colonel House held no formal position and exercised no official functions. The President had offered 'with the deepest pleasure and alacrity' to place him wherever he was willing to be placed.<sup>1</sup> But House preferred always to avoid office. Because of his personal relations with Wilson and at the President's desire he was none the less drawn into an unbroken series of informal conferences, the gist of which when important was sent down to Washington, and when unimportant shunted aside and prevented from confusing the already overburdened officials. Although he was rarely in the capital, he had daily conversations with members of the Government and the President, for a private telephone ran directly from his study to the State Department. 'It is only necessary to lift off the receiver, and I reach Polk's desk immediately. . . . It gives me constant touch with Washington.' The telephone was extended to Magnolia when House left New York for the summer, so that his immediate connection with the capital remained unbroken.

The papers of Colonel House record a kaleidoscope of personal contacts. To his small study on Fifty-Third Street came all sorts and conditions. It was there that he discussed with Paderewski the plans for the formation of a Polish army, the raising of funds for Polish relief, the political character of the Poland that was to be revived by the future Peace Conference, and its boundaries.<sup>2</sup> Thither came the Ambassadors of all the Allied nations and the special commissioners in charge of the problems of finance and supplies. There, or, if it were summer time, to his house in Magnolia ('all the roads lead ultimately to Magnolia,' said Northcliffe

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, February 6, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the speech made at Warsaw, on February 20, 1919, by Paderewski, Prime Minister of the new Polish Republic: 'The great results obtained in America ought to be attributed to my sincere friend, the friend of all the Poles . . . Colonel Edward House,' *Indépendance Polonaise*, February 22, 1919.

in August), Colonel House talked with unofficial envoys: with Henri Bergson, the distinguished French philosopher, concerning methods of coöperation with France; <sup>1</sup> with T. P. O'Connor, who outlined the Irish situation — 'a good conversationalist, has an Irish brogue, takes snuff like a gentleman of the eighteenth century.' Labor leaders like Peter Brady, socialists like Max Eastman, journalists like Herbert Croly and Lincoln Colcord, British and American Major-Generals, bankers, members of the Administration and members of the Republican Party — with all of them House talked so as to have an insight into each situation from as many angles as seemed necessary to get a true picture, so that it might be passed on to the President. 'It is a wearisome job, but I keep at it.'

To him came also those especially interested because of their position or knowledge, in the shipping, food, aircraft, coal, and Red Cross problems. Members of the Advisory Commission of the Council on National Defense explained their anxieties and submitted their proposals for the co-ordination of government purchasing and fixing of prices. His days were a continual turmoil; telephone calls, telegrams, letters, and personal interviews occupied every waking hour. To his callers House gave encouragement, sometimes advice; but he served them chiefly by putting them in touch with the proper official authority.

If the callers on Colonel House were measured by the hundreds, the letters written to him during this period, when he acted as the auditory nerve of the Administration, are to be reckoned by thousands. His files are crammed with applications for government positions from college presidents and professors, the heads of great industrial corporations, camouflage artists, journalists (some of them since not undistin-

<sup>1</sup> Colonel House's papers record various conversations with M. Bergson in the United States and in Paris and there are letters from the French philosopher expressed in the most intimate terms.

guished), professional organizers. A politician of some note suggests that he will accept a cabinet position, or would like to become a member of the Peace Commission. There are myriads of memoranda to be handed over to the proper official: 'Will you be good enough to inform me if you can suggest any method of getting a prompt decision from the War Department on this important matter?' There are letters of gratitude, not quite so numerous indeed: 'I know that I am indebted to you for this honor and you know how I thank you for it.'

Those planning the mobilization of scientific and industrial effort sent him their memoranda for criticism;<sup>1</sup> industrialists wrote him on the proper method to settle the coal or the railroad problem; financiers wrote regarding the tax plan of the Secretary of the Treasury; naval experts on the policy of Secretary Daniels; journalists on the unsatisfactory relations between the Administration and the Press, which 'have become intolerably tangled. . . . If something could be done to straighten it out, it would have an immense influence on the conduct of the war.' Pacifists sent him plans for the ideal peace settlement; experts or pseudo-experts wrote concerning the dehydrating of food, the destruction of German crops by salt scattered from airplanes, the introduction of a system of portable moving pictures to enliven the addresses of patriotic orators.

If Colonel House had passed on to Washington a hundredth part of the applications or the information which thus came to him, it is not likely that he would have long maintained friendly relations with the Administration. What filtered through him was evidently regarded as valuable, for the letters of the President breathe not merely affection but gratitude: I am grateful to you all the time . . . and everything you do makes me more so. . . . You may have entirely

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Report of Advisory Commission of Council on National Defense, by Dr. Hollis Godfrey.



satisfactory replies to my objections. . . . Will you not write me again. Your grateful friend. . . . I devour and profit by all your letters.<sup>1</sup>

President Wilson invoked the advice of House, as in the early days of his administration, in making the new appointments and arranging for the new organizations that resulted from our entrance into the war. The President left it to him to develop the suggestion of Cleveland Dodge, that H. P. Davison be induced to accept the war organization of the American Red Cross. 'Dodge wants Davison to be the executive head of the Red Cross,' wrote House in April, 'believing that it will mean the difference between a five million proposition and a fifty million.'<sup>2</sup> Davison undertook the great task, which House later described as 'perhaps the finest piece of executive management accomplished during the entire war.' Through his visits and letters House was kept in close touch with the initial difficulties that Davison overcame.<sup>3</sup>

President Wilson also asked House to take up with Mr. Hoover, who had achieved the miracle of Belgian relief, the conditions under which he would assume control of the food problem. On April 6, Mr. Hugh Gibson, who as secretary of the American legation at Brussels had formed close relations with Mr. Hoover, wrote to House that 'he is evidently anxious to go to work'; he enclosed a cable from Mr. Hoover: 'Relief will be fully organized within ten days and I shall be available for any appropriate service if wanted.' On April 18, Norman Hapgood wrote to House that Mr. Hoover was sailing for the United States. 'He is somewhat worried: does not wish to undertake the work unless enough independence goes with it to make it successful: that is, he would not want

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, June 1, July 21, August 16, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> In the end Davison raised approximately four hundred million.

<sup>3</sup> Davison to House, July 25, August 8, August 17, August 24, September 1, September 5, September 21, 1917.

to be under any department. I am writing this more tactfully to the President and Secretary Houston, but to you I may speak without indirection.'

Mr. Hoover landed in New York on May 3, and came up to House's apartment that afternoon. 'He has a well-thought-out and comprehensive plan,' wrote House in his diary, 'if he can only put it into execution. . . . Hoover knows the question of food control as no other man does, and he has energy and driving force.'

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 4, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Hoover, as you know, is just back. I hope you will see him. . . . He has some facts that you should know. He can tell you the whole story in about forty minutes, for I timed him.

I trust Houston will give him full powers as to food control. He knows it better than any one in the world and would inspire confidence both in Europe and here. Unless Houston does give him full control I am afraid he will be unwilling to undertake the job, for he is the kind of man that has to have complete control in order to do the thing well.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Mr. Hoover was at once appointed Food Commissioner. In August, by the Lever Act, the President was empowered to create the Food Administration, at the head of which he placed Mr. Hoover with almost dictatorial powers. These he exercised with a combination of tact and enthusiasm which inspired the complete coöperation of the entire country. Without food cards or statutes, purely through the force of public opinion and of voluntary self-sacrifice, the Food Administration accomplished the economies and the extra pro-



duction necessary to meet the famine that threatened our European associates in the war.

Colonel House was also commissioned by the President to discuss with General Goethals, the constructor of the Panama Canal, who had just been appointed the head of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, the conditions necessary to producing new ships in sufficient numbers to offset the ravages of the submarines.

*'April 21, 1917: I went up to Mezes' for dinner to meet General George Goethals. . . . It has been a long time since I have met any one I like so well. He is modest and able. I feel he is something like Kitchener, slow but sure. The undertaking which he has in mind needs celerity rather than thoroughness. . . .*

*'He told of the difficulties. He agreed it would be better to use steel because the ships would be lighter by 15 per cent, therefore they would bear that much more cargo, and they would be more valuable for a merchant marine after the war.*

*'He believes if the President will permit him to commandeer certain steel products which foreigners have contracted for, and to commandeer shipyards which are now building for foreign accounts, he can make a creditable showing within a year. The people will be disappointed because the tonnage will be far less than anticipated. Goethals doubts whether he can do better than two million tons the first year, and he does not believe he can get out any tonnage before October 1st.*

*'May 2, 1917: Paderewski followed Grasty to discuss Polish matters. Farrell, Bedford, and Moore <sup>1</sup> came upon his heels. The purpose of their interview was to discuss how this*

<sup>1</sup> James A. Farrell, President of the United States Steel Corporation; Alfred C. Bedford, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Standard Oil Company, and Chairman of the Petroleum Committee of the Council of National Defense; and George Gordon Moore, New York capitalist.

country could most quickly supply the tonnage the Germans are destroying. I suggested General Goethals be communicated with and that Farrell, Goethals, and I get together here for luncheon or dinner Sunday and work it out. I would then place the matter before the President and ask him to give Goethals absolute authority and not have him hampered by the Shipping and other boards.'

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 6, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

General Goethals took lunch with me to-day. He is very much disturbed over the delay in getting the shipbuilding programme started. He is already two weeks behind what he had counted on. This means a loss of 200,000 tons — if, indeed, the building of tons can be speeded up within six months to 400,000 tons a month as he hopes. . . .

Goethals, at my request, made the enclosed memorandum to show what in his opinion is immediately needful. If he can know by to-morrow or Tuesday if you favor these proposals he can make a start at once.

The tonnage required cannot be built wholly of timber because, in the first place, there is not enough seasoned timber in the country to anywhere near meet the requirements, and the wooden ships cannot be built as quickly as the steel nor are they as effective when built.

Goethals has gone into the subject exhaustively and he declares there is no other way to meet the question. There are an infinite number of firms that have offered to build wooden ships, but he tells me that after inquiry he finds if contracts were let through these firms, they would never be able to carry them through. For instance, Florida offers to deliver a given number of wooden ships, but, upon investigation, he says the different companies are counting largely upon the same material and the same labor and they would

not be able to carry on construction for more than one tenth of the number contracted for.

Please pardon me for bringing this matter to your attention but it seems so vital, not only to our success in the war, but also to your own success, that I am doing so.

If Russia can be held in line, if the shipbuilding programme can be accomplished and the food situation be met, the war must go against Germany.

In order to carry through such a programme I know you will agree that it is necessary to place these matters almost wholly in the hands of one man, as it will never be possible to do it through boards or divided responsibility.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

*General Goethals' Memorandum*

1. Executive order placing the ship yards at the disposal of the Shipping Board or preferably the U.S. Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation.

2. Authority of the President to build steel ships in addition to wooden ones.

3. Appropriation of \$500,000,000 for building 3,000,000 tons of shipping.

4. Appropriation of \$250,000,000 to purchase ships now on the ways if found desirable.

Estimate of \$500,000,000 based on 3,000,000 tons at \$155 per ton.

To this President Wilson replied immediately after receiving it, that he had devoted practically his entire day to the shipbuilding problem; had had Mr. Denman, chairman of the Shipping Board up 'on the Hill,' explaining the necessities of the situation to the men 'upon whom we shall have to depend,' and that he was arranging for a series of conferences. It would not be possible to follow General Goethals'

programme 'in all its length,' but the President could promise to use his influence in this all-important matter to the utmost: General Goethals may be sure that I am on the job and that the way will be cleared as fast as possible for what I realize to be immediately and imperatively necessary. . . . He added that the German ships were being put in repair as fast as the shops could repair them and that the two interned German raiders would be named the *Steuben* and the *DeKalb*: That seemed to me to have a poetic propriety about it. . . . All of us unite in affectionate messages.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately for the shipbuilding programme, the relations between the Shipping Board and the Emergency Fleet Corporation did not prove harmonious, conflicts of authority and policy developed, and after months of wasted effort a complete reorganization became necessary. It was not until the following spring that American shipyards, under the driving leadership of Mr. C. M. Schwab, began to launch tonnage with the necessary speed.

## IV

Conferences in which Colonel House found especial interest were those with foreign envoys. President Wilson asked him to undertake such relations in the belief that because of their purely unofficial character they might develop a frankness of expression that would be less likely if carried on by an official representative of the United States. The generous attitude and coöperation of the Secretary of State made such conferences possible and useful. For Mr. Lansing House felt admiration and affection. A decade later he wrote:

'The country has never quite appreciated Lansing. No other Secretary of State had so difficult a task. The years of neutrality before we entered the war presented many delicate

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, May 7, 1917.



and intricate situations, and a false step might have proved disastrous. He made none.

‘I shall always remember with gratitude his attitude toward me. My position was unusual and without precedent, and it would have been natural for him to object to my ventures in his sphere of activities. He never did. He was willing for me to help in any way the President thought best.

‘The country owes Lansing much and some day I hope appreciation may be shown for his services during the perilous days of the Great War.’<sup>1</sup>

The following excerpts from House’s papers throw light on the nature of the conferences he had with the Ambassadors:

‘*May 2, 1917*: The Japanese Ambassador took lunch with me and we had more than two hours’ discussion. There was no one present other than ourselves. It is delightful to me to come in touch with Eastern diplomacy. Sato is an able fellow and maintained his position well. I got a glimpse of the Japanese Government and of the constitution under which they work.

‘The most important point of conversation occurred when he asked me whether or not this was a good time for his Government to take up with the Washington Government the unsettled questions between the two. He said when the war ended, all points which might cause friction between the United States and Japan should be smoothed out. This, he said, he understood to be the President’s desire. I asked him to enumerate the points he had in mind. He spoke of the land law and our immigration laws as being the ones that hurt their national sensibilities most. He thought, however, that if an arrangement could be made between the two countries by which no new adverse legislation would be enacted in the Western States against the Japanese, they might be satisfied.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel House to C. S., March 24, 1928.



'He understood the difficulty under which our Government was working, because of the rights of States to pass legislation which sometimes conflicted with the national policy and with foreign treaties.

'I advised Sato not to take these matters up officially at this time because it might leave a suspicion that it was done for the purpose of forcing a decision just as the United States was entering the war against the Central Powers. I advised that he give me a memorandum of his Government's views so that they might be discussed unofficially. He saw the point and agreed to do so. He is to give me the memorandum when he returns to Washington. He hesitated, however, about putting it in writing, saying his Government had not authorized him to take the matter up officially. . . .

'The calmness, the poise and the placidity of this conference delighted me. We were both as expressionless as graven images, and there was no raising of voices or undue emphasis upon any subject, no matter how important.'

*Ambassador Sato to Colonel House*

WASHINGTON, May 8, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

For your kind reception and open-hearted talk which I had the pleasure of enjoying in New York, I wish you to accept my warm and sincere thanks. According to your suggestion, I have since prepared a memorandum succinctly setting forth the point which formed a part of our conversation and I am taking the liberty to send it to you for whatever use you may see fit. . . .<sup>1</sup>

With high regard and cordial wishes, I beg you, Dear Colonel House, to believe me,

Very sincerely yours

AIMARO SATO

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter.

## 24 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

### *Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 11, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Last week the Japanese Ambassador took lunch with me. Before the end of our conversation he wanted to know if I did not think it a good time to take up the differences existing between our two governments. . . .

I am enclosing you a copy of his letter and the memorandum and my reply. When you have leisure, will you not advise me concerning this. If Russia swings back to autocratic government, I think a close alignment between Germany, Japan, and Russia is certain. . . .

Walter Rogers has just returned from the Far East. . . . He strongly advises a better news service to Japan, China, and Russia. I will not go into details, but from what I learn, not only from Rogers but from others, this is one of the crying needs of the moment.

The general public in both Japan and China regard us as being almost as unwilling to fight as China herself, and none of our war preparations and but little of your addresses have reached the people.

This can all be changed at very little cost. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Although of later date, the following letter indicates House's interest in the Japanese problem which doubtless affected his opinion two years later on the Shantung question at the Peace Conference.

### *Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, September 18, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

. . . I had a talk with Roland Morris<sup>1</sup> to-day. I hope you will see him for ten or fifteen minutes before he leaves for

<sup>1</sup> Recently appointed Ambassador to Japan.

Japan next Tuesday, in order to give him your viewpoint as to Far Eastern questions. I think he has the right view himself and, if you agree with it, he will understand in what direction to proceed.

We cannot meet Japan in her desires as to land and immigration, and unless we make some concessions in regard to her sphere of influence in the East, trouble is sure sooner or later to come. Japan is barred from all the undeveloped places of the earth, and if her influence in the East is not recognized as in some degree superior to that of the Western powers, there will be a reckoning.

A policy can be formulated which will leave the open door, rehabilitate China, and satisfy Japan. Morris sees this clearly but needs your sanction, if, indeed, such a policy has your sanction.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

With the new Russian Ambassador from the provisional government, Colonel House also maintained close relations. At various times during the summer the Russian envoy visited him, evidently believing that through the Colonel he had a means of presenting directly to President Wilson Russia's increasing need of assistance from the outside, if she were to be saved from going to pieces.<sup>1</sup> House endorsed his pleas for aid. 'I do not think we can devote too much attention to the Russian situation,' he wrote the President, 'for if that fails us our troubles will be great and many.'

The relations of Colonel House with the French and

<sup>1</sup> On July 23, House wrote to Wilson: 'The Russian Ambassador was here yesterday. He tells me that he has gone the round of Cabinet officers and officials and is at the end of the passage regarding certain matters. He wanted to know whether he had better approach you with these questions. I advised him again to press the proper officials rather than to take his troubles to you. I promised, however, to tell you of them.' House then summarized M. Bakhmetieff's report on Russian needs.

British Ambassadors were of quite a different nature, for they rested upon sincere personal friendship. He had fought through with them the troublesome issues of the days of American neutrality, when United States interests frequently had clashed directly with those of the Allies. These differences had apparently not shaken the confidence of the Ambassadors in House, and they had certainly not affected his respect and admiration for them. 'Jusserand knew America,' wrote House, 'as he knew Europe. His familiarity with the President's personality and views, due to his long residence in Washington, was of value in many dangerous situations. Jusserand had long been the closest tie between France and the United States and he had the respect and love of both countries.'

Of Ambassador Spring-Rice, House later wrote: 'What a ruthless and destructive force is war! Here was perhaps the ablest and best-trained member of the British diplomatic service. There was no one who possessed to a greater degree the affection and confidence of his chiefs, and no one was more deserving. With all his accomplishments he possessed a personal charm that made him a multitude of friends. But when war broke loose he had a serious illness. Under ordinary circumstances he would soon have righted himself, but with the stress of disasters coming day by day, he could not regain his normal health. On he had to go, impelled by a high sense of patriotism and duty. He went as far and as hard as he could, but what he could not do he was willing should be done by others. He was one of the few I have known who did not hesitate to yield his prerogatives in order that his country's interests might not suffer. Even so the task finally proved too great. He gave his life for his country as surely as though he had been slain on the field of battle.'

In view of House's friendship for the Ambassadors of France and Great Britain, as well as because of his experience in Europe and his contacts with the political leaders of the



Allied Powers, President Wilson placed particular confidence in the Colonel's judgment on all matters of foreign relations: You are closer in touch, he wrote him in the early summer, with what is being said and thought on the other side of the water than we are here.<sup>1</sup>

It was thus not unnatural that Mr. Wilson should have called House into active participation in the first important conferences with representatives of the Allies, which took place shortly after our entrance into the war.

## APPENDIX

### *Ambassador Sato's Memorandum*

The Japanese-American question which calls for an immediate adjustment, is that of the treatment of the resident Japanese in this country. What Japan desires is nothing more than the enjoyment of the most favored nation treatment. That desideratum may be attained in my personal opinion, by the adoption of some of the following means:

#### 1. By Treaty.

a. By concluding an independent treaty, mutually guaranteeing to the citizens and subjects, the most favored nation treatment, in matters of property and other rights relative to the exercise of industries, occupations, and other pursuits. Negotiations in this line were for some time conducted between Secretary Bryan and Ambassador Chinda, which, however, for reasons I need not here state, have since been in abeyance.

b. By revising the existing commercial treaty between our two countries, so as to conform, in its stipulations, to similar engagements between Japan and various European powers, which guarantee, in principle, the most favored nation treatment, in the enjoyment of property rights and in all that relates to the pursuit of industries, callings and educational studies.

#### 2. By American legislation.

Although the subject is not fit for international discussion, it may be mentioned that a constitutional amendment restraining any State from making and enforcing any law discriminatory against aliens in respect to the property and other civil rights, will prove a far-reaching remedy. In fact a resolution with the same object in view has, I understand, been introduced in Congress lately.

In this connection, I may state the fact that the provisions of racial distinction in the present naturalization law, were, in a number of instances, made use of for the purpose of depriving Japanese subjects of the rights and privileges of a civil nature. Although the wisdom of the law is in itself a matter of national and not international concern, the unfortu-

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, June 1, 1917.



## 28 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

nate circumstance that certain provisions of that law furnish a pretext for the impairment of alien civil rights, should, I may be allowed to remark, constitute a fit subject for legislative attention.

The comparative merits of each means should be studied by both Governments in the light of expediency and feasibility. Whether the adoption of any one means will be sufficient to cover the whole ground is a matter upon which precaution forbids me to pass a final judgment at present, but I am strongly convinced that each means will go a long distance towards a complete solution of the question.

Before concluding, I desire to touch upon the subject of immigration. The question whether Japanese laborers shall be admitted or not, has been consummately solved by the continued faithful observance by Japan of the so-called Gentleman's Agreement. So far as the Japanese Government is concerned, it is no longer in the realm of living questions, and in my view, it would serve the best interests of both nations to leave the question as it is.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BALFOUR MISSION

It pleased me to have Balfour rise with enthusiasm to the suggestion that Great Britain and the United States would stand together for a just peace. . . .

*Colonel House's Diary, April 22, 1917*

#### I

PRESIDENT WILSON realized that the new war organization of the United States must be developed, not upon abstract principles, but in direct relation to the special needs of the Allies. The problem was not so much to get ready for war as to supply those things — men, ships, credit — in which the Allies were running short. The entrance of the United States into the war enhanced the potential resources of the anti-German group tremendously, but it would be of small practical value if it brought an isolated effort and not real coöperation. Germany had counted on the probability that America's effort, undertaken without adequate preparation, would not affect the outcome of the war, which was to be settled by the submarine. The gamble might succeed if close correlation were not at once established between the necessities of the Allies and the ability of the United States to satisfy them. As Sir William Wiseman wrote to House in September, 1917: 'Germany's greatest asset is the three thousand miles that separates Washington from London.'

The futility of an isolated American effort was keenly appreciated by the President and his advisers, and it was largely as a result of American insistence, especially on the part of Secretary McAdoo and the heads of the war boards, that full coöperation was finally secured. The process was necessarily slow, for American opinion had to be educated to both the need and the opportunity. There was then, as there

will always be, a modicum of opinion which insisted that the United States had been lured into the war by designing interests for the purpose of pulling Entente chestnuts from the fire. President Wilson himself was careful always to keep the United States distinct from any hard-and-fast war alliance, and introduced the phrase 'associated power' to indicate the status of this country in its relation to the Allied powers of Europe.

The Allied Governments were well-informed of the various conditions in the United States which affected the problem of American coöperation. Through the British and French Ambassadors who had many friends in Republican circles, they followed the trend of unofficial opinion. They relied also upon the reports of the British chief of secret service, Sir William Wiseman, who because of his close contacts with Colonel House was regarded as an authoritative exponent of President Wilson's policy.<sup>1</sup> A carefully drafted memorandum of Wiseman, which before going to the British Government was read by President Wilson and pronounced by him to be 'an accurate summary,' explains the difficulty as well as the importance of the problem of American coöperation from the Allied point of view.

*Memorandum on American Coöperation*

1917

'The sentiment of the country would be strongly against joining the Allies by any formal treaty. Subconsciously they [the Americans] feel themselves to be arbitrators rather than allies. On the other hand, the people are sincere in their determination to crush Prussian autocracy, and in their longing to arrive at some settlement which will make future wars impossible.

'It is important to realize that the American people do not consider themselves in any danger from the Central Powers.

<sup>1</sup> See *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, II, 400.





*With the affectionate esteem  
of R. H. Murray. 8-6-18.*

SIR WILLIAM WISEMAN





It is true that many of their statesmen foresee the danger of a German triumph, but the majority of the people are still very remote from the war. They believe they are fighting for the cause of Democracy and not to save themselves.

‘There still remains a mistrust of Great Britain, inherited from the days of the War of Independence, and kept alive by the ridiculous history books still used in the national schools. On the other hand there is the historical sympathy for France, and trouble could far more easily be created between the British and the Americans than with any of our allies. German propaganda naturally follows this line, and has been almost entirely directed against England. . . .

‘Any pronouncement [the Allied Governments] can make which will help the President to satisfy the American people that their efforts and sacrifices will reap the disinterested reward they hope for, will be gratifying to him, and in its ultimate result serve to commit America yet more wholeheartedly to the task in hand. The more remote a nation is from the dangers of the war the more necessary it becomes to have some symbol or definite goal to keep constantly before it. The Americans are accustomed to follow a “slogan” or simple formula. The President realized this when he gave them the watchword that America was fighting “To make the world safe for Democracy”; but the time has come when something more concrete and detailed is needed.

‘Our diplomatic task is to get enormous quantities of supplies from the United States while we have no means of bringing pressure to bear upon them to this end. We have to obtain vast loans, tonnage, supplies and munitions, food, oil, and other raw materials. And the quantities which we demand, while not remarkable in relation to the output of other belligerents, are far beyond the figures understood by the American public to-day.

‘The Administration are ready to assist us to the limit of the resources of their country; but it is necessary for them

to educate Congress and the Nation to appreciate the actual meaning of these gigantic figures. It is not enough for us to assure them that without these supplies the war will be lost. For the public ear we must translate dollars and tonnage into the efforts and achievements of the fleets and the armies. We must impress upon them the fighting value of their money.

‘The Administration are too far from the war, and have not sufficient information, to judge the merits of these demands. The Allies will have to use patience, skill, and ingenuity in assisting the American authorities to arrive at a solution of this one grave difficulty, which is in a phrase, “The coördination of Allied requirements.”’

The Allies were anxious to secure close diplomatic co-operation with the United States so soon as our entrance into the war appeared likely. A week after the dismissal of Bernstorff, Mr. Balfour’s Secretary, Sir Eric Drummond, wrote as follows to Colonel House:

*Sir Eric Drummond to Colonel House*

LONDON, February 9, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

Mr. Balfour is sending a telegram to our diplomatic representatives to tell them that he considers that full and frank coöperation between British and United States diplomatists and agents is one of the most important factors of the war. He is further telling them that he relies on them to do everything in their power to secure such coöperation.

This ought to avoid any possibility of relations being anywhere impaired by local suspicions.

Yours very sincerely

ERIC DRUMMOND

Existing diplomatic agencies, however, would hardly suf-

fice to develop and maintain the sort of relations which the entrance of the United States into the war made essential; they would demand the attention of highly expert technical advisers and organizers. No matter how able the Ambassadors, their routine duties would interfere with the new problems of belligerent coördination. Furthermore it would be difficult for the same men who had borne the strain of the discussions relating to neutral trade, the blacklist, and the holding up of American mails, to meet the new conditions.

Immediately following the President's speech asking for a war declaration, the British Government considered the advisability of sending to the United States a special mission, the obvious purpose of which should be to put at the disposal of our Government the experience gained by Great Britain in nearly three years of war and which might also bring the British into closer touch with the situation in America. The importance of the mission was indicated by the choice of Mr. Balfour, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as its chief.

*Sir Eric Drummond to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, April 5, 1917

May I offer you my warmest congratulations on magnificent speech of the President.<sup>1</sup> We are all deeply moved at its terms and tone. When Congress has responded to the great ideals which he has expressed, we trust consideration will be given to a commission, technically expert, being sent from here to place at the disposal of the United States Government the experience gained in this country during the war.

It has been suggested that Mr. Arthur Balfour should be the head of such a commission for a short time to coördinate its activity and to discuss wider issues involved.

Would it be possible for you to give me your opinion pri-

<sup>1</sup> The speech of April 2, asking Congress to declare the existence of a state of war between Germany and the United States.



vately on this? Your telegram would not, of course, be used to forward any proposal which would not meet with the warm approval of the President and your people; especially as the absence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs for even a few weeks has many inconveniences.

ERIC DRUMMOND

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, April 5, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I am enclosing a cable which has just come from Eric Drummond, Balfour's confidential secretary. Of course it is really Balfour speaking.

Will you not advise me what reply to send. I do not see how you can well refuse this request, coming as it does. It might be well to have a Frenchman of equal distinction come at the same time.

Balfour is the most liberal member of the present British Cabinet and it would be of great service to the relations of the two countries to have him here and to talk with him in person.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

'April 6, 1917: Polk tells me over the telephone that the President read the cablegram at the Cabinet meeting to-day and they discussed the advisability of my sending a favorable response. . . .

'The French Government have offered to send Joffre and Viviani over. . . . The only objection to their coming that I can see is that it might create an unfavorable feeling throughout the country that we are fighting more for the Allies than we are for the great principles laid down by the President in his April second speech.'

Whatever his doubt of the effect upon certain strata of

opinion, House's belief in the practical value that would result from the suggested missions was such that he wrote the following letter to the President, which indicates what was in his mind but which on second thought he did not send; perhaps he feared lest he might appear to be urging a personal conviction.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, April 6, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

The more I think of Balfour's proposal to come to America, the better it seems to me. It would put you in personal touch with one of the most influential men in the Empire and would increase your prestige enormously at the peace conference. I would like Balfour to know you and to take back his impressions so they might come from a less partisan voice than mine. If a Frenchman of equal distinction should accompany him, that too, would help in the same direction. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

On April 6 President Wilson replied to House's first letter that of course the suggested mission would be welcome, although he himself visualized certain dangers in the effect upon opinion and feared that some Americans might misunderstand our relations with the Allies. A great many, he added, would look upon the mission as an attempt, in some degree, to take charge of us as an assistant to Great Britain. But he believed, none the less, that many useful purposes would be served and perhaps a great deal of time in getting together saved.<sup>1</sup> Three days later he wrote House of the coming of a French mission, 'apparently only of compliment,' headed by Viviani and Joffre.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, April 6, 1917.    <sup>2</sup> Wilson to House, April 9, 1917.

*Colonel House to Sir Eric Drummond*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, April 9, 1917

Many thanks for your kindly message. My friend has always held these convictions, but until Russia joined the democratic nations he did not think it wise to utter them.<sup>1</sup>

He is greatly pleased that Mr. Balfour will come to the United States and of course I am delighted. It should result in settling many problems that confront us, and this country will appreciate the honor. I hope he may come immediately.

I would suggest the mission be announced as diplomatic rather than military, and that the military and naval members be of minor rank in order that this feature may not be emphasized.

E. M. HOUSE

Thus on the very day that by formal vote of Congress the United States entered the war, it was decided to welcome the Allied envoys. Within a week the Balfour Mission was on the Atlantic, and on April 21 they landed at Halifax, whence they came by train through New York to Washington. A few days later arrived the French Mission led by Viviani and Joffre, to be followed shortly by the Italians and Belgians.

Whatever the outcome of the conferences that followed, the despatch of these missions was of itself significant, a gesture symbolic of coöperative effort by which alone Germany could be defeated.

## II

On the morning of April 22, the Balfour Mission en route to Washington passed through New York. Besides the Foreign Secretary and Sir Eric Drummond the Mission included representatives of the army, navy, and treasury, General Bridges, Admiral de Chair, Lord Cunliffe. At nine in the morning Colonel House, at the suggestion of the British Embassy, went down to the Pennsylvania station in

<sup>1</sup> Referring again to Wilson's speech of April 2.

New York to meet Balfour, who entered and left the city entirely by tunnel. The interview covered general topics only, but House's report to Wilson is interesting in that it indicates his fear lest in the Washington conferences the vital but dangerous topic of war aims should be raised. House himself believed that at this time it ought to be avoided. It was the moment, he felt, to emphasize the need of coöperative effort rather than to bring up any underlying differences of purpose between America and the Allied powers; these could be settled, he thought, only after the defeat of Germany was assured.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, April 22, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

At the suggestion of Sir William Wiseman who, I believe, spoke also for Sir Cecil, I met Balfour as he passed through this morning and had an interesting talk with him. . . .

I told Balfour that unless you advised to the contrary I thought it would be well to minimize the importance of his visit here to the extent of a denial that it was for the purpose of forming some sort of agreement with the Allies. I find there is a feeling that this country is about to commit itself to a secret alliance with them.

Such men as X and Y [extreme liberals] have been to see me and I could not convince them that the object of the visit of the British and French was not for this purpose.

I hope you will agree with me that the best policy now is to avoid a discussion of peace settlements. Balfour concurs in this. If the Allies begin to discuss terms among themselves, they will soon hate one another worse than they do Germany and a situation will arise similar to that in the Balkan States after the Turkish War. It seems to me that the only thing to be considered at present is how to beat Germany in the quickest way.



I told Balfour I hoped England would consider that a peace which was best for all the nations of the world would be the one best for England. He accepted this with enthusiasm.

If you have a tacit understanding with him not to discuss peace terms with the other Allies, later this country and England will be able to dictate broad and generous terms — terms that will mean permanent peace.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

As we shall soon see, it proved impossible not to discuss war aims, partly, at least, because Mr. Balfour himself had naturally assumed that Wilson would wish to know of the secret treaties by which the Allied powers had guaranteed to each other the fulfillment of their war aims, and had come fully prepared to discuss them with the United States Government. At this first interview, however, House touched on the crucial topic only so far as to verify his conviction that the British Foreign Secretary would stand, at least in principle, for the sort of settlement Wilson had demanded in his speech of April 2. So much appears from a passage in his diary supplementing his letter to the President.

*'April 22, 1917: I advised Balfour to be entirely frank in his statement to the President of the difficulties under which the Allies are struggling. . . .*

*'I urged him not to talk peace terms, and to advise the President not to discuss peace terms with any of the other Allies. If he did, differences would be certain to arise and the problem now was to beat Germany and not discuss peace. Balfour agreed to this in full, and said he would not talk to the President about peace terms unless the President himself initiated it.*

*'Balfour asked what I thought of negotiations with*

Austria, Turkey and Bulgaria for separate peace. I thought well of Austria and Bulgaria <sup>1</sup> . . .

‘It pleased me to have Balfour rise with enthusiasm to the suggestion that Great Britain and the United States would stand together for a just peace — a peace fair to all, to the small as well as the large nations of the world. Great Britain and America, I thought, were great enough to rise above all petty considerations. I thought that what was best for the smaller nations was best, in the long run, for Great Britain and the United States. This peace might easily be one of the greatest events in history and if we were to justify ourselves, we should not be small or selfish in its settlement.

‘In speaking of the war, Balfour said it was perhaps the biggest event in history but beyond that he could not think; he could not grasp the details and probably would never be able to do so; that coming generations might find it possible to see the thing as it really existed but we could not. . . .’

The first days of the Mission’s visit to Washington were taken up with official receptions. Mr. Balfour displayed the tact and magnetism necessary to evoke unstinted enthusiasm for the Allies, which was enhanced by the arrival of the French Mission on April 24. If there had existed any fear that the United States was about to be caught in the toils of European diplomacy, it was lost in the burst of applause that was given the Allied Missions. The ceremonials at the capital were by no means wasted time, since they did much to impress upon the country the fact that the war was a coöperative enterprise.

Colonel House remained in New York during the first days of the Balfour Mission’s visit; at the request of Wilson he came over to Washington for the week-end. On the 26th of April he had lunch with the President.

<sup>1</sup> At this time the United States was at war with neither of these states.

'My conversation with Balfour,' said Wilson, 'was not satisfactory. How would it be to invite him to a family dinner, you being present, and go into a conference afterwards?'

The President was anxious, apparently, to settle the question of war aims as between the United States and the Allies. There was much to be said in favor of clarifying this problem at the moment the United States entered the war. On the other hand, as House had intimated in his letter of April 22 to Wilson, dangers lurked in the raising of it.

We had taken up arms against Germany, according to Wilson's speech of April 2, both because Germany had already made war upon us through the submarine and because of our desire to achieve a lasting and just settlement. We were tacitly pledged to the defeat of Germany. If we did not come to agreement with the Allies as to the sort of peace to be imposed upon her, there was danger that we might be fighting for Allied war aims, perhaps as crystallized in the secret treaties. On the other hand if, after learning the terms of the secret treaties, we refused our approval, what then? We could hardly state that we would not continue to fight Germany, since we had our own quarrel with her. It would be futile to announce that because of our disapproval of the purposes of the Allies we would make war by ourselves. If we stated that we would fight with the Allies but reserved the right later to dispute the application of the secret treaties, the only effect would be to cause irritation and to injure the chances of effective coöperative action against the enemy.

Colonel House knew of the secret treaties. He had told the President of the Treaty of London before Italy entered the war, and Grey had told him of the demands of Rumania, so that he must have guessed the terms upon which she entered the war.<sup>1</sup> He was shortly to learn more about them.

<sup>1</sup> See *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, I, 462.



But he hoped that the President would not at this time make an issue of them, and he feared the results of an American demand that the Allies renounce them. The time might come when the United States would be in a position to enforce such a demand as a necessary preliminary to a stable peace. But America, coming late into the war and as yet having made no material contribution toward victory, had not attained that position.

Later President Wilson was severely criticized for having failed to settle the whole question of war aims at the moment when we entered the war. If the criticism is just, evidently Colonel House must share the responsibility. As will appear, neither the President nor House felt that it was possible to endanger unity with the Allies by raising a protest against the secret treaties.

*'April 26, 1917: [Conference with President Wilson.] I argued against discussing peace terms with the Allies, just as I did in my first conversation with Mr. Balfour and in my letter to the President. The President thought it would be a pity to have Balfour go home without a discussion of the subject. My thought was that there was no harm in discussing it between themselves if it was distinctly understood and could be said, that there was no official discussion of the subject, and if neither Government would discuss peace terms with any of the other Allies.<sup>1</sup> It was agreed that this should be done.'*

The President commissioned Colonel House to present to Mr. Balfour his invitation to dinner, thus preserving the desired atmosphere of informality; later it was decided that House should first discuss with the Foreign Secretary the general problem of war aims and ask him about the secret treaties, before the dinner with the President.

<sup>1</sup> It is not clear how the British, who had treaties with the other Allies, could be expected not to discuss them if occasion arose.



In view of the later controversy regarding American knowledge of the secret treaties, Colonel House's record of the following conversation with Balfour is of the utmost historical importance. It is unsatisfactory in a certain sense, for he dictated his notes on this conversation in a haste that could not be avoided and was obviously dealing in generalities. Unless this fact is kept in mind, the notes give an impression of superficiality. It should also be remembered that this discussion and those that followed were not directed to the merits of the secret treaties themselves, but rather to their bearing on American policy and the relations between America and the Allies.

*'April 28, 1917: My most important conference to-day was with Mr. Balfour. . . . No one else was present and we talked for an hour and a half without interruption. And this reminds me that Sir Eric asked yesterday whether it would be convenient for Balfour to continue to be a guest of the Government rather than to go to the British Embassy as planned.<sup>1</sup> . . . We asked Drummond, and Balfour as well, to open their minds freely, as to one another, so that things might go without friction. They promised to do so and this is an evidence of it.*

*'Balfour wished to know where we should begin our discussion, whether we should first take up peace terms to be imposed in the event of a decisive defeat of Germany, or whether to take it up on a basis of a stalemate of partial*

<sup>1</sup> Through the courtesy of Mr. Breckinridge Long, Third Assistant Secretary of State, Mr. Balfour had been given the use of his house during the Mission's stay in Washington. 'In some ways,' Colonel House wrote, 'Breckinridge Long occupied a position of his own in the Wilson Administration. A man of wealth, of culture and of an old and distinguished family, he filled an enviable niche. He had charm, discretion and a sense of political values that made him an important factor in the State Department. He looked beyond his departmental duties, and worked assiduously to strengthen the President's position. He sought to clarify and popularize the President's policies.'

defeat. I thought we had better discuss the first proposition.

‘He had a large map of Europe and of Asia Minor and we began this most important and interesting discussion, the understanding being that he and I would go through with it first, letting me convey our conclusions to the President before the three of us had our conference on Monday.<sup>1</sup>

‘He took it for granted that Alsace and Lorraine would go to France, and that France, Belgium, and Serbia would be restored.

‘He first discussed Poland and outlined what its boundaries should be. Of course, the stumbling block was the outlet to the sea. There can be no other excepting Danzig. . . . This would leave an Alsace and Lorraine to rankle and fester for future trouble.<sup>2</sup> Balfour thought it might be made a free port, and in that way satisfy Poland. At the moment, I do not look upon this with favor, particularly since the Germans and Poles would be antagonistic and ready upon the slightest provocation to find grievances against one another. However, I warmly advocated a restored and rejuvenated Poland, a Poland big enough and powerful enough to serve as a buffer state between Germany and Russia.

‘Serbia came next, and it was agreed that Austria must return Bosnia and Herzegovinia, but that Serbia on her part should give to Bulgaria that part of Macedonia which the first Balkan agreement gave her.

‘Rumania, we thought, should have a small part of Russia which her people inhabited and also a part of Hungary for the same reason.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> House later wrote that this map had the secret treaty lines traced on it and that Balfour left it with the Colonel. It is not to be found among the House Papers, and was doubtless handed over to The Inquiry and later sent to the State Department.

<sup>2</sup> German protests against this corridor, which was established by the peace treaties, are clear evidence of the extent to which it constituted a factor of unrest.

<sup>3</sup> References evidently to Bessarabia and Transylvania and the Banat. They may have looked small upon Balfour’s map but the territories

‘We thought Austria should be composed of three states, such as Bohemia, Hungary, and Austria proper.

‘We came to no conclusion as to Trieste. I did not consider it best or desirable to shut Austria from the Adriatic. Balfour argued that Italy claimed she should have protection for her east coast by having Dalmatia. She has no seaport from Venice to Brindisi, and she claims she must have the coast opposite in order to protect herself.’

The mention of the aspirations of Italy gave to House the opening for which he had been waiting and permitted him to put the pertinent question as to the secret obligations which the Allies had assumed towards each other for the fulfilment of their war aims.

‘This led me to ask,’ House continued, ‘what treaties were out between the Allies as to the division of spoils after the war. He said they had treaties with one another, and that when Italy came in they made one with her in which they had promised pretty much what she demanded.

‘Balfour spoke with regret at the spectacle of great nations sitting down and dividing the spoils of war or, as he termed it, “dividing up the bearskin before the bear was killed.” I asked him if he did not think it proper for the Allies to give copies of these treaties to the President for his confidential information. He thought such a request entirely reasonable and said he would have copies made for that purpose. He was not certain they had brought them over, but if not, he would send for them.

‘I asked if he did not consider it wise for us to keep clear of any promises so that at the peace conference we could exert an influence against greed and an improper distribution of

promised Rumania by the secret treaty of Bucharest, signed August 17, 1916, would almost double the area of Rumania. Bessarabia, belonging to Russia, was not included in the territories then promised Rumania.



territory. I said to him what I once said to Grey, that if we are to justify our being in the war, we should free ourselves entirely from petty, selfish thoughts and look at the thing broadly and from a world viewpoint. Balfour agreed to this with enthusiasm.

'Constantinople was our next point. We agreed that it should be internationalized.<sup>1</sup> Crossing the Bosphorus we came to Anatolia.<sup>2</sup> It is here that the secret treaties between the Allies come in most prominently. They have agreed to give Russia a sphere of influence in Armenia and the northern part. The British take in Mesopotamia [and the region] which is contiguous to Egypt. France and Italy each have their spheres embracing the balance of Anatolia up to the Straits.<sup>3</sup>

'It is all bad and I told Balfour so. They are making it a breeding place for future war. I asked what the spheres of influence included. Balfour was hazy concerning this; whether it meant permanent occupation, or whether it meant that each nation had the exclusive right to develop the resources within their own sphere, he was not altogether clear.

'We did not touch upon the German Colonies, neither did we touch upon Japan, China, or the Eastern question generally.<sup>4</sup>

'We went back to Poland. His objection to a Polish state, cutting off Russia from Germany, was whether it would not

<sup>1</sup> This does not tally with the promises made by Great Britain and France to Russia in March, 1915, according to which Constantinople should belong to Russia but should be a free port for goods not entering Russia. House must have misunderstood Balfour, perhaps interpreting 'free port' as meaning 'free city.'

<sup>2</sup> Meaning evidently Turkey in Asia.

<sup>3</sup> Italy's demands were met in a general fashion in the Treaty of London; they were agreed to more definitely at this very time, April 19, 1917, at St. Jean de Maurienne.

<sup>4</sup> Just before the United States entered the war France, Great Britain, Italy, and Russia agreed to approve Japan's claims to German rights in Shantung and the German islands north of the equator.



hurt France more than Germany, for the reason it would prevent Russia from coming to France's aid in the event of an attack by Germany. I thought we had to take into consideration the Russia of fifty years from now rather than the Russia of to-day. While we might hope it would continue democratic and cease to be aggressive, yet if the contrary happened, Russia would be the menace to Europe and not Germany. I asked him not to look upon Germany as a permanent enemy. If we did this, it would confuse our reasoning and mistakes would likely be made. Balfour, however, was more impressed with the German menace than he was by the possible danger from Russia.'

### III

House did not urge Balfour to give him complete details of the secret treaties, nor, being a private citizen, would he wish to ask for copies of the texts. It seems clear that he realized always the danger of pressing the discussion to a point which might emphasize the differences between the American and the Allied war aims. The following evening the Colonel dined with President Wilson and, if we may depend upon his diary notes, nothing was said of the matter nor of the approaching conference which Wilson was to have with Balfour. The President seemed anxious to escape from current politics.

'*April 29, 1917:* The President, Mrs. Wilson, Miss Bones and I had dinner alone. After dinner we went to the upstairs sitting room and talked upon general subjects for awhile. The President read several chapters from Oliver's "Ordeal by Battle." He was interested in what I had to tell him of Oliver, and we discussed the different points Oliver made in the chapters read. . . .

'The President declared his intention of writing some things which were on his mind, after he retired from office.

... He said he had no notion of writing about his administration, but expressed a desire to write one book which he has long had in mind and which he thought might have an influence for good.

‘He said, “I write with difficulty and it takes everything out of me.” This estimate of himself in that field of his endeavors would surprise the general public, since he is considered such a fluent writer. I asked how long it took him to write his April 2nd Address to Congress. He said ten hours. I offered the opinion that his January 22nd speech to the Senate was a much abler document because it had more original thought. His April 2nd speech pleased, I thought, because it reflected the public mind, both here and in the Allied countries.

‘He talked of the proposed book and its contents. I thought if he would bring out clearly the necessity for a more responsive form of government, and the necessity for having Cabinet members sit in the House of Representatives, it would be worth while. He agreed that if the Cabinet officers sat in the House, the outcome would be that the President would have to take his material for the Cabinet from Congress. This, in the end, would give the Cabinet more power, and would have the further effect of bringing into Congress the best talent in the country. It would eventuate in something like the British system.’

On the following evening, April 30, the intimate conference between Wilson and Balfour took place in the White House, preceded by the family dinner which the President insisted upon and which proved conducive to the sort of informal discussion of war aims that was desired.

‘Besides the President, Mr. Balfour and myself,’ wrote House, ‘there was no one present at dinner excepting Mrs. Wilson and Miss Bones. The President did most of the

talking. . . . The conversation was along general lines, mostly educational, historical and architectural. The President told several stories of Lincoln, and Balfour listened with interest. He said Lincoln was not ready for the Presidency when it came to him; that up to that time he was not sufficiently educated and had not had adequate public experience. He spoke of the difficulty Lincoln had in acquiring an education and of his manner of obtaining it. They both thought it little less than marvellous, with his antecedents and limited opportunities, that he should develop a distinct literary flavor. . . .

'In talking of education, the President expressed himself as not being in agreement with the general modern trend against the Classics. He thought the world had gained as much by the untruths of history as by the truths. He did not believe the human mind should be held down to facts and material matters. He considered that the trouble with Germany to-day. German thought expressed itself in terms of machinery and gases. The reading of the romance languages and of the higher flights of fancy in literature led one into spiritual realms which, to say the least, was as advantageous to the world as its material progress. . . .

'We took our coffee in the oval sitting room and when it was finished we went to the President's study and began a conference, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. The President continued to do most of the talking. It was evident to me that he was keyed up for this conference, as he had been resting most of the afternoon, not taking his usual exercise. . . .

'The ground we covered was exactly the same as Balfour and I had covered in our conference Saturday. I tried to steer the conversation so as to embrace what Balfour had said to me and what the President and I had agreed upon in former conferences.

'When we touched upon the internationalization of



Constantinople I suggested that it might lead to trouble. It was with some difficulty that I made them understand that I thoroughly agreed with the general idea, but desired to point out that it would inevitably lead to an attempt to internationalize the Straits between Sweden and Norway and Continental Europe, and the Suez and Panama Canals. They did not agree with me that the two questions had much in common. . . .

'The discussion ran from shortly before eight o'clock until half past ten, when the President was due at a reception given by the Secretary of State to the members of Congress to meet the British and French Missions.

'I asked Balfour again about the Allies' treaties with each other and the desirability of his giving copies to the President. He again agreed to do so.

'When the conference broke up I walked downstairs with Mr. Balfour and asked if he felt that his mind and that of the President had touched at all points. He was quite enthusiastic and said he had never had a more interesting interview. He spoke of the President as having a wonderful combination of human philosophy and political sagacity.

'The President and Mr. Balfour went to the reception together and I went to my room to prepare for the train. Before I left, the President had returned and we had a few minutes further conversation. He was delighted at Balfour's comments, and seemed happy over the result of the evening's work.'

Colonel House's record of this conversation is interesting not merely because it indicates clearly that the existence of the secret treaties was discussed, but also because the President evidently did not think it worth while to make an issue of the topic. The discussion, like that of House with Balfour two days before, was not based upon the treaties, but rather upon the most satisfactory settlement that could be arranged



to ensure peace. House had already told Balfour that he regarded Allied plans as expressed in the treaties as 'bad,' and Wilson, who did much of the talking, must have indicated his own preferences.

Some months later, at the time of the drafting of the Fourteen Points, President Wilson expressed concern over the promises made in the secret treaties, particularly in the Treaty of London. Aware of his misgivings, Sir William Wiseman informed Mr. Balfour, who wrote at some length to the President regarding Allied obligations.

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to President Wilson*

LONDON, *January 30, 1918*

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

I gather from a message sent by Wiseman that you would like to know my thoughts on the Italian territorial claims under the treaty of London concluded in 1915.

That treaty (arranged of course long before I was at the Foreign Office) bears on the face of it evident proof of the anxiety of the Allies to get Italy into the war, and of the use to which that anxiety was put by the Italian negotiators. But a treaty is a treaty; and we — I mean England and France (of Russia I say nothing) — are bound to uphold it in letter and in spirit. The objections to it indeed are obvious enough: It assigns to Italy territories on the Adriatic which are not Italian but Slav; and the arrangement is justified not on grounds of nationality but on grounds of strategy.

Now I do not suggest that we should rule out such arguments with a pedantic consistency. Strong frontiers make for peace; and though great crimes against the principle of nationality have been committed in the name of 'strategic necessity,' still if a particular boundary adds to the stability of international relations, and if the populations concerned be numerically insignificant, I would not reject it in defer-

ence to some *a priori* principle. Each case must be considered on its merits.

Personally, however, I am in doubt whether Italy would really be strengthened by the acquisition of all her Adriatic claims; and in any case it does not seem probable that she will endeavour to prolong the war in order to obtain them. Of the three west-European belligerents she is certainly the most war-weary; and if she could secure peace and '*Italia Irredenta*' she would, I believe, not be ill satisfied. . . .

Yours very sincerely

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

P.S. I shall always be delighted to answer with complete frankness any question you care to put to me. But this I think you know already.

It is thus quite certain that the President was informed of the character of the secret treaties and was entirely aware of the difference between his own peace programme and that of the Allies. At the time of the Balfour Mission he may have expected that in the end American influence at the Peace Conference would be sufficient to eliminate the treaties as practical factors in the settlement. Writing to Colonel House, a few weeks later, President Wilson intimated strongly that American economic power would be such that the Allies must perforce yield to American pressure and accept the American peace programme: England and France, he wrote, have not the same views with regard to peace that we have by any means. When the war is over we can force them to our way of thinking.<sup>1</sup>

If President Wilson regarded the secret treaties as of small ultimate consequence, it is not surprising that at the moment when we entered the war he refused to make an issue of them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, July 21, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix to this chapter.

## IV

In the mean time Colonel House found opportunity, before his return to New York, to come into contact with most of the members of the missions, French as well as British.

'April 29, 1917: At one o'clock, Frank Polk, Miss Bones, Miss Brennan and I drove to the Navy Yard to board the *Mayflower*, which Secretary Daniels had commissioned to take the French and British Missions to Mount Vernon. In addition to the personnel of the Missions the members of the Cabinet were present. I was busy from the time I boarded the ship until I returned, with discussions with different people.

'The most interesting person aboard was Marshal Joffre. . . .

'April 30, 1917: This has been a day filled with important work. . . . State Department officials, Cabinet members, etc., etc. Conversations with the French and British Missions. . . .

'I lunched at the French Embassy. The other guests besides the Ambassador and Madame Jusserand were, Marshal Joffre, Viviani, Admiral Chochresprat, Henry White, Myron T. Herrick, Marquis de Chambrun, Frank Polk. Before lunch there was a very pretty ceremony. The household servants and some neighborhood children brought flowers to Joffre and presented him with a small souvenir. He thanked them in a few sentences.

'My next engagement was with Sir Eric Drummond, which we filled by a drive. Since our last talk he had thought of Viscount Grey of Fallodon as a special envoy to the United States to remain indefinitely. This I considered an admirable suggestion. He wondered whether Grey would accept. . . . It would mean that they would have a representative of the British Government here with whom I

believed the President would talk as frankly as to a member of our own Government. . . .

'We arranged to keep in constant communication and I urged him to let us know of any difficulties which might arise, or of any annoyance however petty which might come up and would not be known unless he dealt frankly with us.

'My next engagement was with Émile Hovelague.<sup>1</sup> This also was filled by a drive with him through Rock Creek Park. . . .

'Hovelague told of how serious conditions were in France and how necessary it was to send our troops at once. The Allies seem to be pretty much at the end of their tether, and it is to be hoped Germany is in an even more depleted condition. . . .

'I went to Henry White's residence, where the French Mission is quartered, and was shown into the Marshal's room, where we had our conference. Joffre began by saying that he was anxious to explain the condition of France and how necessary it was for American soldiers to be sent over at once. He thought he could put them in condition to go to the front within five weeks after they arrived, provided they knew the rudiments of military tactics. He merely wanted them to be disciplined and to know the manual of arms.

'To me Joffre looks more of the German than the French type. He must have been quite blonde when young. His hair is now so streaked with gray that it is difficult to know its original color. His eyes are peculiar and, to me, the most striking feature he has. He seems to have a well ordered mind, and appears to be the type of General well suited to the French in the time of stress which they were under when he was in general command. I constantly compared him, in my own mind, to General Grant. I told him this, and he seemed not displeased at the comparison. . . .

'The French have used bad judgment in sending envoys

<sup>1</sup> Of the French Mission.



here who cannot speak English, for it makes it impossible for us to have as complete an understanding with them as with the English. One hesitates to trust entirely an interpreter. I can see more and more clearly the danger of friction between the Allies. Distrust lies close beneath the surface, and a little difference between them would bring it from under cover. This danger is not being well guarded. The Japanese, Russians, and Italians are being left out of English, French, and American calculations. As far as one can see, they do not appear at any of the functions in Washington except the larger ones, and there is a lack of Russian, Japanese, and Italian flags which might easily hurt sensibilities. The British and ourselves are not unlike the Germans in that our manner indicates that other nations do not much matter.'

On the evening of April 30 Colonel House returned to New York, but at Wilson's suggestion arrangements were made for him to continue conversations with members of the Allied Missions. What the President chiefly desired was an understanding regarding the tone of public statements that might be issued with the purpose of affecting opinion in Germany. It was also important to discuss the general sense of any replies that might be made to future peace proposals. He did not intend to bind himself to approve Allied policies, but he did wish to know what was in the minds of the British and French. He was certainly in complete agreement with Allied determination to achieve the 'defeat of Germany,' but he wanted to know exactly what was meant by the phrase. What did 'security against German aggression' connote? Must the war be carried to the point of breaking up the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires? He was anxious not to permit belligerent emotion to cloud common sense and he desired calmly to balance the relative advantages of minimum and maximum war aims in the light

of the price that must be paid in human lives and material wealth.

On all these matters agreement between the President and House was so complete that he knew that his own point of view would be clearly explained by Colonel House to Mr. Balfour, and the conference would have the advantage of being entirely unofficial.

*'May 8, 1917: The usual telephone calls,'* wrote House, *'have come from Washington and elsewhere. Wiseman had word from Washington that Balfour will lunch with us on Sunday. I have also arranged to dine with the British Ambassador Saturday and have Sir Eric Drummond for tea Sunday. This will give satisfactory conferences with all of them. . . .*

*'There is not much satisfaction talking with the French, for the reason they are not clothed with any authority, and are merely here to tell of France's needs and to express her appreciation of our entrance into the war. With Balfour it is different. He is Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of our most powerful ally and it may be that he will figure largely at the peace conference. . . .*

*'May 13, 1917: The main business of the day was my conference with Balfour. He came for lunch and remained until four o'clock, giving us ample time to go over the international situation. At lunch we discussed the impossibility of distinguished visitors getting the true American feeling or spirit because of the kind of people they necessarily met and the limited area of the country they visited. I told of the South and the West and of their sturdy and silent patriotism, and how they would quietly make ready for the struggle upon which we have embarked. . . .*

*'There was no one at the table excepting Balfour and myself. After lunch we adjourned to my study. We decided we ought to have some understanding as to each other's minds*

regarding the inauguration of peace measures. Germany at any time might make a tentative offer. . . .’

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 13, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Mr. Balfour took lunch with me to-day and we had a very interesting talk.

I suggested that it would be well to use his influence towards limiting the members of the peace conference to a minimum and I expressed the hope that you would consent to go from here as our only representative. He concurred in the wisdom of having a body small enough for it not to be unwieldy.

I asked him what would be his inclination in the event Germany made a tentative offer of peace on the basis of the *status quo ante*. He thought it would largely depend upon the condition of the U-boat warfare and also upon the condition of Russia, France, and Italy.

It was my opinion that we ought not to let our desires run away with our judgment in the matter of making peace. For instance, if Turkey and Austria were willing to break away from Germany, or were willing to force Germany to make peace, I thought certain concessions should be made to them other than what we would have in mind in the event we had our complete will. He agreed to this.

He also agreed to the proposal that there should be no insistence that the makers of the war should be punished before a settlement had been even tentatively discussed.

He asked me to express to you his very great appreciation of your coming to Congress to hear him speak. He understands what an unprecedented compliment it was and is deeply moved. . . .

He is very happy over his visit and considers it a great success from every viewpoint.





*Arth James Balfour 1915*

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR  
(now Earl of Balfour)





Some time ago I had a letter from Page proposing that we start a propaganda in England to improve the feeling towards us. I spoke to Balfour about this and suggested that it would be better if this were done by the English themselves. He agreed to take it up with his government and see that it was properly done.<sup>1</sup>

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

The British were evidently conscious that the question of sincere German peace offers was for the moment quite outside the circle of practical possibilities. They responded more quickly to the suggestion that a concerted and continual drive should be made on German morale. House believed that to break the belligerent spirit behind the lines was as important as to defeat the armies; this result could be attained, he felt, by constant repetition of the note which Wilson struck in his war speech of April 2: that the war was waged by the Entente and America for the liberation of all peoples, Germans included, and that the Allies had no quarrel with the German people, no desire to dismember Germany; with the German military autocracy, however, the Allies would never deal. On May 20 House discussed this policy with Sir Eric Drummond, who promised to draft a memorandum embodying these principles so far as they met the views of the Foreign Office.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 20, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Sir Eric Drummond has been here for two days. We have gone over the situation of the Central Powers and he has given me the views of his Foreign Office on many points. . . .

<sup>1</sup> This letter was answered on the telephone by the President, who approved its general tenor.

I convinced Drummond that the most effective thing we could do at present was to aid the German liberals in their fight against the present German Government.

The idea is for you to say, at a proper time and occasion, that the Allies are ready at any moment to treat with the German people, but they are not ready to treat with a military autocracy — an autocracy which they feel is responsible for the troubles that now beset the world. It is not fair to the peoples of Russia, of Great Britain, of France, of Italy, and of the United States to be asked to treat with a military caste that is in no way representative of the German people themselves.

Both Drummond and I think that care should be used not to include the Kaiser. He has a very strong personal following in Germany, and if he is shorn of his power . . . he could be rendered harmless. In not designating the Kaiser, the hands of the liberals will be strengthened because there is an element in Germany that would like to see a democratic Germany under a limited monarchy. The situation in Russia will accentuate the feeling that it is better not to make a too violent change from an autocracy to a republic. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

The draft statement of policy agreed upon by Sir Eric and Colonel House, which, according to a note of Colonel House of May 23, was approved by Mr. Balfour, began by declaring that the United States and the Allies were determined to carry on the struggle until the aims set out by President Wilson were secured. America would spare neither treasure nor life, no matter how long the war continued. In 1918 there would be a million and a half American soldiers on the

<sup>1</sup> This letter also was answered by the President on the telephone in a tone of general approval.

Western Front.<sup>1</sup> But, although the Allies would never abandon the 'cause of democracy and civilization,' and Germany could never hope for a favorable decision by force of arms, the Allies were ready to declare, as before, that they had no quarrel with the German people, no desire to dismember Germany.

The points outlined in the House-Drummond memorandum deserve careful appraisal, since they formed the basis for the public statements of President Wilson during the remainder of the war: Peace to the German people, endless war on German militarism. Unquestionably the attempt to differentiate between the Germans and their Government, unpopular as it was and fruitless as it seemed at the time, served finally to weaken German morale, the collapse of which, according to Ludendorff, explains the sudden character of the final surrender. The possibilities of this policy were perceived by Lord Northcliffe, who in the following spring organized at Crewe House the most effective scheme of propaganda known to modern history. Ceaselessly he poured into Germany the idea that unless the people repudiated the old régime, their own ruin would be linked with that of the Hohenzollerns. It acted as a subtle corrosive which ultimately ate away the German 'will to victory.'

v

The Balfour Mission slipped quietly out of New York, across the Canadian border, and back to England. The French and the Italians shortly followed. It yet remained to be seen whether practical working agencies could be evolved capable of directing the strength of America into the channels of assistance most necessary to the Allies. The

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that as early as May, 1917, as here indicated, President Wilson determined to send over so large an American expeditionary force.



Missions represented the first attempt to secure coördination between the United States and the Allies, and it was not unnatural that they did not succeed immediately in establishing effective coöperation; the task was one which would require long months of experiment.

The Missions, none the less, did go far to create the cordial atmosphere essential to whole-hearted coöperation. Most important of all, perhaps, they made possible a frank interchange of personal opinion which facilitated the settlement of many delicate questions such as are bound to disturb the official relations of even the most friendly governments. The Balfour Mission, in particular, established a close liaison between the British and the Americans that continued throughout the war.

*Sir Eric Drummond to Colonel House*

LONDON, July 10, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

I am afraid that we have been overwhelming you with numerous telegrams on various subjects since we got back, but you were so kind to us on the Mission and definitely asked me to refer to you if any difficulties arose, that we have been emboldened to take what is perhaps an undue advantage of your kindness.

The visit to the United States really has done Mr. Balfour good physically, and he is much less tired than when he started from here. I need not tell you how happy he was in your country nor how much he appreciated the pleasure of seeing you again.

I would like further to say that he formed a very great personal regard and admiration for the President. . . . You know how well the two men got on together and I think I may say how mutual their respect for each other was. . . .

I trust that you are well and that your many cares are not placing too great a strain upon you. I do not like to

contemplate what the position might be if we were deprived, even for a short time, of your counsel and assistance.

Yours very sincerely

ERIC DRUMMOND

## APPENDIX

The problem of the extent to which officials of the United States knew of the existence and the content of the secret treaties has always been one of a controversial nature. President Wilson in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on August 19, 1919, stated that he had no knowledge of the secret treaties as a whole before he reached Paris: 'The whole series of understandings were disclosed to me for the first time then.' He further stated that he was not informed of the Treaty of London. Senator Johnson recited the list of various treaties, including the Treaty of London, the agreement with Rumania, the various agreements with reference to Asia Minor, and asked: 'Did you have any knowledge prior to the conference?' To which the President replied: 'No, sir, I can confidently answer that "No" in regard to myself.'

It is difficult to reconcile this statement with available evidence. On March 4, 1918, Mr. Balfour, in reply to a question in the House of Commons as to whether copies of the secret treaties had been sent to the President, replied 'that President Wilson is kept fully informed by the Allies.' On May 16, 1918, Mr. Balfour stated in the House of Commons: 'I have no secrets from President Wilson. Every thought that I have in the way of diplomacy connected with the war is absolutely open to President Wilson.' Furthermore, in a private letter to Colonel House, written July 17, 1922, permission to publish which is now authorized, he states in reference to a discussion of the secret treaties by Mr. R. S. Baker: 'He [Mr. Baker] was certainly wrong in his statement that Mr. Wilson was kept in ignorance by me of the secret treaties, an error which I feel the more acutely, because it is a calumny which, if I remember rightly, I have already publicly contradicted.' The clearest evidence of Mr. Balfour's frankness with President Wilson is to be found in his letter of January 30, 1918, above quoted; this shows that, upon receiving information from Sir William Wiseman to the effect that President Wilson was disturbed by the content of the Treaty of London, Mr. Balfour immediately wrote him regarding it.

The papers of Colonel House confirm this evidence. They indicate that Mr. Balfour and Colonel House discussed the secret treaties, and that in the conference with President Wilson which followed 'exactly the same ground was covered.' The question of the Far East was not raised and there is nothing to show that either Colonel House or the President knew anything of the understanding between the Allies and Japan regarding Shantung. Secretary Lansing stated before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he learned in 1917 of the projected division of the German Islands in the Pacific, but nothing about Shantung.

Although it seems clear that President Wilson knew of the Treaty of London in 1917,<sup>1</sup> it is possible that, after reaching Paris two years later and following the turmoil of the Conference, he may have confused the date of his hearing of this Treaty with the date of hearing of the understanding with Japan regarding Shantung. All these agreements were loosely lumped together under the caption 'Secret Treaties.' At no time did the President take them very seriously, since the peace settlement was determined by the active forces at Paris and not by the secret treaties, which in every case were seriously modified. It is possible that Mr. Wilson had been early advised of the existence of the agreement with Japan, but forgot the fact, as it was crowded out of his mind by the influx of an astounding amount of detail, and thus failed to recollect the date when several years later he was suddenly questioned on the subject by the Foreign Relations Committee. Such confusion of mind, in the circumstances, may reasonably account for his statement that he knew nothing of the Treaty of London before he reached Paris.<sup>2</sup> The following is the conclusion of Colonel House.<sup>3</sup>

'I disagree with the critics of President Wilson, both regarding his testimony before the Senate Committee as to when he first had knowledge of the secret treaties, and in the matter of his apparent lack of appreciation of their importance.

'It is doubtful whether he knew of the treaty with Japan until he reached Paris. I cannot recall having such knowledge myself and my papers do not indicate that either of us knew. The President may have had that treaty in mind when questioned by the Senate Committee, or it may be that he forgot the date when the information first reached him. There was nothing to be gained by a misstatement, and it is clear to me that he spoke from conviction.

'There was no man living at that time who had more varied information and misinformation brought to him than President Wilson. How could he on the spur of the moment know when he first heard of this or that?

'There are those who believe the President laid too little stress upon the treaties and that he should have had some understanding with the Allies regarding them before he committed the United States to war. This was not practicable. We had our own quarrel with Germany, and if he had waited until he could have gotten a satisfactory understanding regarding the secret treaties the war would have been over before we entered the lists. England and France might have come to a quick decision, but, of necessity, they would have had first to reach an agreement with Japan, Italy, and Russia. Could any satisfactory agreement have been reached with them? I doubt it. Meanwhile, Germany would

<sup>1</sup> In 1918 the Treaty of London, published by the Bolsheviks and reprinted by the Manchester *Guardian*, was public property.

<sup>2</sup> His testimony was given barely a month before his complete physical and nervous collapse.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter of April 9, 1928 to C. S.

have sunk our ships and we should have been standing idly by, waiting for a termination of negotiations regarding the secret treaties.

‘As it was, the United States entered the war promptly and efficiently, but as an associate Power, uncommitted to any agreements made between the Allies. Our hands were untied and we were free to do as we would at the peace table. If any criticism is to be made, should it not be of what we failed to do there, and not what we failed to do before we entered the war?’



## CHAPTER III

### TARDIEU AND NORTHCLIFFE

These people are getting deeply into the war and are most resolute.

*Lord Northcliffe to Lord Rothermere, from New York, September 7, 1917*

#### I

THE difficulties of waging war successfully by means of a coalition may be studied in any history. It is impossible to secure absolute unity of political or military action, and even imperfect coördination of a sort between the governments and armies of allied powers demands a variety of mutual sacrifices which few are willing to make except in the face of compelling peril. These difficulties were experienced by the European allies in their struggle against the Central Powers and never entirely overcome. It was all the more difficult to achieve coördinated action with the United States, which refused to accept the responsibilities of a treaty of alliance and insisted upon keeping its freedom of decision unrestricted.

The Balfour and Viviani Missions did not establish, did not indeed attempt to establish, machinery of coördination. They created, however, an atmosphere of mutual understanding which proved of political importance; this was especially true in the case of Anglo-American relations. President Wilson was acutely aware of the need of frank interchange of opinion and he was particularly pleased by the directness of Mr. Balfour's attitude during his conferences with the President and House. It was natural that he should ask Colonel House to develop his personal relations with the British, so that there might be informal means of exchanging facts and opinions with a frankness that would not always be possible between official departments of even the most

friendly nations. Sir William Wiseman thus describes the arrangements that were necessary.

‘Colonel House foresaw the serious delays which would occur if communication was held through the ordinary diplomatic channels, and realized the appalling difficulty of President Wilson’s coöperating usefully with the Allies at a distance of more than three thousand miles, especially as it was impossible to have any one in Europe who could speak authoritatively for the American Government without reference back to Washington. Balfour also dreaded the delays which must inevitably occur. In discussing this vital question, Colonel House arranged, with the President’s approval, that Balfour should cable in a special British Government code direct to me in New York, and that I should make it my chief duty to attend to these cables and bring them immediately to Colonel House, who could telephone them over a private wire to the State Department or to President Wilson. In this way Balfour, speaking for the British Government, could get an answer from President Wilson, if necessary, within a few hours. This would have been utterly impossible had the communications gone through ordinary diplomatic channels.’

An obvious example of the frankness with which opinions could be exchanged is to be found in a discussion which Colonel House began during the visit of the Balfour Mission and continued after its return to Great Britain. It concerned no less delicate a topic than the relative strength of the British and American navies. Historically it is chiefly of interest not because it affected the course of the war, but rather in the light of subsequent negotiations which became of the first importance after the Armistice and the close of the Wilson Administration.

The provisions of the Navy Bill passed by Congress in

1916 would, when carried into effect, make the United States Navy second only to that of Great Britain; indeed, in the opinion of various experts the reinforced American Navy would approximately equal that of the British in total strength.<sup>1</sup> The immediate value of this increase in the American naval forces, however, was lessened by the emphasis which the Navy Bill placed upon capital ships, whereas in the war against the German submarine the great need was lighter and swifter craft. The Allies asked, accordingly, that the United States postpone the building of capital ships in order to concentrate upon destroyers.

Since the United States desired above everything to bring effective assistance in the war against the submarine, they were anxious to meet this request. But they had also to consider what the ultimate effect would be upon their after-war naval strength if they neglected the building of capital ships. Would it be possible to enter into an arrangement with the British which would permit the United States to concentrate for the moment upon the building of destroyers and yet ensure the American Navy against the peril resulting from lack of capital ships, which, in the opinion of many experts, constituted the bulwark of naval strength? House raised the problem frankly with Balfour and Drummond. On May 13 he wrote in his diary:

‘In talking with Drummond, I called attention to the Allied demand that we build submarine destroyers at the expense of our major battleship programme. To do this would leave us at the end of the war where we are now, and in the event of trouble . . . we would be more or less helpless at sea. I thought if Great Britain would agree to give us an option on some of her major ships in the event of trouble, . . . we could go ahead with our destroyers without fear of subsequent events.

<sup>1</sup> This opinion was advanced at the Paris Peace Conference.

'Drummond replied that Germany's navy might be left intact after the war and Great Britain might have need of all her fleet in a further war with Germany. In this event I suggested we give Great Britain an option to read that in case of war with Germany we would return the battleships which we had taken over, and would give her in addition an option on some of our major ships. He is to take it up with Mr. Balfour and let me know the result.'

*Sir Eric Drummond to Colonel House*

WASHINGTON, May 14, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

I have spoken to Mr. Balfour on the matter we discussed yesterday, and personally he welcomes your proposal most cordially. The subject is, however, of so great importance that he has thought it right to send a telegram to the Prime Minister to obtain his approval before proceeding further. I hope we shall have a reply within the next day or two, and if so I think Mr. Balfour may wish me to come at once to New York to discuss with you how best to take the next step. In any event I hope to be in New York again at the end of this week and will of course let you know as soon as I can make any definite plan. . . .

Yours very sincerely

ERIC DRUMMOND

No decision was made by the British until after the return of the Balfour Mission. Early in July House received from Mr. Balfour a cable which analyzed the problem in the light of the immediate submarine danger as well as of the future relations of the United States.

Mr. Balfour's cable stated that the possibility of a naval agreement to permit the United States safely to concentrate upon destroyers and light craft instead of capital ships had been carefully considered by the War Cabinet. It was of



vital importance, the British Admiralty believed, that the maximum number of destroyers be built. If the United States Government felt that its navy was likely to become dangerously unbalanced, the British Cabinet would be willing to consider some sort of defensive arrangement with the United States to meet the danger. Colonel House's proposal that the British agree to provide definite naval assistance to compensate for the unbuilt American capital ships was likely to raise, however, rather dangerous international issues. Mr. Balfour suggested therefore that the defensive agreement be made more general, and that the six major powers at war with Germany all enter into a naval agreement providing for mutual assistance against any maritime attack for a period of four years after the conclusion of the present war.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel House did not like the suggestion as well as his own plan providing that the British give the United States a definite option on certain British capital ships to be exercised in case of future trouble. Perhaps he feared lest the general defensive agreement should develop into something similar to a formal alliance that might arouse the opposition of American opinion. In Mr. Balfour's plan may be discovered the germ of the Naval Treaties of 1922, which were later concluded by the Harding Administration.

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
July 8, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I am enclosing a cable which I have just received from Balfour. I am sending it in duplicate so you will have a copy for the State Department. No one knows of these negotiations excepting Lansing and Polk. . . .

Breckinridge Long who is here to-day is taking this letter. I cannot see that the solution Balfour suggests would be

<sup>1</sup> Balfour to House, July 5, 1917.

of much service excepting that it would prevent Japan from falling into the hands of Germany and forming a combination against us.

In the event of trouble between Japan and ourselves, or other parties to the agreement, they would be forced to be neutral, or if there was war between any of the signatory powers, the others would necessarily be neutral.

That is not quite what we had in mind. I see no reason why our first proposal should not be accepted, and I see no reason why it should offend Japan or any other nation if known. What I suggested was that in view of our diverting government shipbuilding in our naval yards from the construction of capital battleships to that of vessels suitable for anti-submarine warfare, and the building of a merchant marine in order not to interrupt the supplying of the Allies with necessary materials for the continuation of the war, Great Britain should agree to give us an option on the purchase of such capital battleships as we might wish to replace those which we discontinued building because of our desire to aid them.

This would not be directed against Japan any more than it would be against France, Italy, Russia or even England herself.

Sir William Wiseman expects to return to England early next week and before going he will spend a day with me here. Will you not let me know your conclusions so I may discuss the matter with him and let him in turn take it up with his Government?

If the English are afraid of Germany, it seems to me it would be reasonable to include in the agreement a clause by which in the event of war between Germany and England, they might demand the return of these capital battleships. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

On July 13 President Wilson invited Wiseman to discuss outstanding problems before his visit to England; in the course of the conversation they came to the naval proposals of Balfour and House. Wilson was not enthusiastic in support of either plan. He did not like the idea of anything approaching an alliance with the major European powers and Japan, even one limited in its scope to a purely defensive naval agreement. Nor did he agree with House that the question of capital ships was one of vital importance. The exigencies of the submarine war, he felt, would in any case lead to an emphasis upon the building of destroyers at the expense of capital ships; he seemed quite satisfied that this would not touch the effectiveness of the American navy after the war. Sir William's notes of this part of the conversation follow:

*Wiseman Memorandum upon Conference with the President*

*July 13, 1917*

'Wilson produced a memorandum from House regarding the proposed modification of the United States shipbuilding programme. Wilson said that he was not familiar with this proposition, and was therefore discussing it somewhat in the dark. In his own words — he was "thinking aloud to me." His observations were approximately as follows:

'That in his opinion the war had proved that capital ships were not of much value; that with this in view he did not consider the question of the United States delaying the building of capital ships as very important from a strategic point of view. He explained, however, that when Congress voted money for the naval programme, a specific estimate had to be made of the exact number of the different classes of ships upon which the money had to be spent. It would therefore be unlawful for him to change that programme and alter the number of ships to be built. The only way in which this could be done would be by laying the whole facts before Congress.



‘When asked for a suggested solution [of the problem of defense against the submarine], he stated that he had always been opposed to allowing merchantmen to cross the Atlantic without convoy; that he was strongly in favor of forcing merchantmen to cross in fleets adequately protected by light naval craft. That he believed some such arrangement was now being put in force; that when the merchantmen reached some point near the British coast, lanes should be formed, strongly guarded by destroyers, through which the merchantmen could pass, and, again, when they were quite close to shore they should radiate to the various ports. He suggested that if some such scheme could be devised as an American scheme it would undoubtedly require a larger number of destroyers than the United States at present have, but that he could go to Congress with this scheme and ask for an appropriation specifically for this purpose. That as far as shipbuilding accommodation was concerned there would be no difficulty in delaying the building of capital ships and to make room for the laying down of destroyers, if necessary.

‘With regard to Balfour’s suggestion covering the naval shipbuilding difficulty by some species of defensive alliance: — Wilson stated that in his opinion the Allies had entered during the stress of war into various undertakings among each other which they would find it very difficult if not impossible to carry out when the war was over; and he was not in favor of adding to that difficulty. Moreover he pointed out that while the U.S. was now ready to take her place as a world-power, the strong feeling throughout the country was to play a “lone hand” and not to commit herself to any alliance with any foreign power. With regard to Japan, Wilson said that in his opinion a successful attack on the Pacific coast was absurd owing to the long distance from the Japanese base and the difficulty they would have in obtaining any suitable base on the Pacific coast. The possibil-



ity of their attacking the Philippines or some outlying possession was, he thought, quite another matter, and presented a possibility which could not be overlooked.'

Colonel House was not convinced that the day of the capital ship had passed. Until this was certified by naval experts he believed that it was the duty of the Administration to provide full insurance for the defense of the United States. 'There may be something in the future,' he noted in his diary on July 14, 'but up to now Great Britain's successful blockade of Germany is maintained because she has a superiority in capital battleships.'

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
July 17, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

. . . I have a feeling that he [Wiseman] misunderstood you [concerning the value of capital battleships] for surely the present control of the seas is solely due to the superiority of the British Fleet in capital ships. No amount of smaller craft could take their place. While they are not effective in submarine warfare yet, submarine warfare is as distinct a phase of sea warfare as aircraft are in land warfare. I think it is true to-day as it was before the war that the nation having the most powerful capital battleships in both size and speed is the nation that will dominate the sea.

I hope you will insist upon some arrangement with England by which this country may obtain some of their capital ships at the end of the war, in the event we should wish them. The arrangement would be a safe one, for they need not be taken if not desired. I discussed this question thoroughly with Lord Fisher and other British naval men and there was no disagreement as far as I can remember.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

To this letter the President returned no specific response, and the discussion lapsed during the summer. Late in August, in answer to an inquiry of Sir William Wiseman, who was then in England, House cabled that the 'capital ship question is lagging because of pressure of matters of immediate urgency.' But when Wilson came up to visit House on the North Shore in September the question was again raised, House emphasizing the need and value of capital ships, the President at once skeptical of their value and convinced of the impossibility of a satisfactory arrangement with the British.<sup>1</sup> Colonel House thus describes the discussion with Wilson in his diary of September 9:

'After I had made an argument in favor of capital ships, he refused to discuss the question further, declaring that no matter whether I was right or he was right, it was impracticable to make an arrangement with Great Britain at this time looking to our securing some of her capital battleships after the war in consideration of our abandoning our ship-building programme of capital ships in order to build submarine destroyers. He thought the only thing that could be binding on Great Britain would be a treaty, and a treaty must necessarily go to the Senate for confirmation. He did not believe this country was prepared for a treaty of that sort with Great Britain. Anything less than a treaty he thought footless, because the present administration might change and the British Government might change, and what would a verbal agreement amount to under new administrations? I argued that an arrangement could be made which would meet the approval of our people. He in turn said if the British Government wanted to do this after the war, they would do it anyway, and if they did not want to do it, we had no means of making them short of a treaty. . . .'

<sup>1</sup> British naval expert opinion supported Wilson rather than House, in so far as it declared that the American navy was already relatively strong in capital ships (except battle cruisers) and weak in the categories of fast light cruisers and destroyers.

Because of the imminence of the submarine peril and the representations of the Allies, the American naval authorities used the discretion left them by Congress to bend all their energies towards the building of light craft. Only two battleships, the *Mississippi* and *New Mexico*, were completed and commissioned while the United States was at war, and these had been started before we became a belligerent. The keels of two others, the *Maryland* and *Tennessee*, were laid before the armistice. 'Work on capital ships of the 1916 programme,' according to a Navy Department report, 'was virtually suspended during the period of the war in order to concentrate the facilities of the experienced shipbuilding plants upon the destroyer programme and other types needed to cope with the submarine problem.'<sup>1</sup>

When the war ended, of the ten battleships provided for by the 1916 programme, only two had been completed and nothing had been done on the six battle cruisers authorized by that programme. It is obviously a matter of conjecture or of expert opinion as to whether the American Navy was unduly weakened thereby during the months that elapsed before the conclusion of the Washington Treaties in 1922.

## II

The disagreement between the President and Colonel House over the question of capital ships did not affect ap-

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Navy Department, July 29, 1926. 'Under Acts of Congress dated 4 March, 1917 and 6 October, 1917,' the letter adds, '235 destroyers, in addition to the 50 required by the 1916 programme were laid down; the contracts for six of these were subsequently cancelled, leaving 229 destroyers of the emergency programme which were actually completed. Of the 50 destroyers authorized in the 1916 programme, 38 were contracted for and built.'

'During the period of the war, 6 April, 1917 to 11 November, 1918, 44 destroyers were completed. Of these the keels of five had been laid prior to April 6, 1917.'

'No capital ships were built entirely within the period of the war. The building period of capital ships is materially longer than the 17 months period of actual hostilities.'



parently the former's confidence in House's judgment, for it was during this period that Wilson opened up to House all the sources of official information coming in to Washington and encouraged him to develop his personal relations with individuals in Europe able to summarize unofficial opinion. House received long letters from our Ambassador in Rome, Thomas Nelson Page, Minister Egan in Copenhagen, and Counsellor Frazier in Paris. To him were sent copies of the cablegrams from our European embassies and legations to the State Department. He also received the personal impressions of Henri Bergson in France, of Sir Horace Plunkett in Ireland, and of such American journalists as Grasty and Ackerman.

Of the correspondence in House's files, nothing is more interesting than that with the great Irish statesman Plunkett. During his European visits in 1915 and 1916 Colonel House had developed the most intimate relations with Plunkett; the latter's knowledge of the United States, his close friendship with Mr. Balfour, his sympathetic understanding of opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, enabled him to analyze the European situation in terms most useful for an American. In the days of American neutrality he had earnestly desired and assiduously labored to smooth Anglo-American relations. 'I hold,' he had written to House in December, 1916, 'that the best hope of a lasting peace lies in a right mutual understanding between the peoples of the American Republic and of the British Empire. For this reason I have, as you know, done my best to explain to our Government the difficulties of the President's position, which my long acquaintance with the Middle Western States has enabled me to understand. I wish to continue this slight service; and I should not have come across the Atlantic this year had I not wished to make it more efficient by further study of public opinion in those parts of your country which count most politically and of which least is known in England.'



One of the most dangerous sources of Anglo-American disagreement has always existed in the problem of Ireland, and crises in the history of the Irish struggle for self-government have invariably been reflected in American politics. The 1916 rebellion and its suppression had been followed in the United States by expressions of anti-British sentiments, some of them upon the floor of the Senate itself. If general sympathy developed with the Sinn Fein movement, which grew rapidly after the executions of 1916, and if it stimulated strong anti-British feelings in the United States, the difficulties of Anglo-American coöperation in the war against Germany would be tremendously increased. In these circumstances it was fortunate that Colonel House was in such close relations with the one Irishman of moderate views most capable of explaining the situation to President Wilson; especially fortunate was it that in the summer of 1917 Sir Horace Plunkett became chairman of the Irish Convention called to discover a reasonable settlement of the Irish question, and which sat all through the summer and autumn. With the approval of the British Government, Sir Horace was permitted to send Colonel House, for Wilson's information, the secret reports which he wrote of the Convention proceedings. These he amplified with personal letters and cables, of which the following is typical.

*Sir Horace Plunkett to Colonel House*

DUBLIN, September 28, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

Sir William Wiseman conveyed to me a personal request from the President that I would keep him confidentially informed of the progress of the Irish Convention. At the same time I was commanded by the King to write a Secret Report for him, and I asked leave to make the same document serve the double purpose. I understand that the first two instalments of this Report were taken out by Sir William but, by

some accident, I was not informed, and only to-day have I learned from Arthur Balfour that I am free to send the further instalments to you for submission to the President. Three more have been printed and will, I hope, be sent to you by the Foreign Office at once. I am struggling to write the sixth, which will bring the story up to date; but in the extreme pressure of Convention work it is hard to get the time.

Yesterday we ended a three days' sitting in Cork and brought the first stage of our proceedings to a conclusion. I was determined to make the Convention reveal its entire mind before I let it adjourn so that a thoroughly representative Committee of workable size might try to agree upon a measure to be submitted to the whole body. . . . In order to get a free expression of opinion, it was necessary to keep our deliberations absolutely secret. No stenographer is allowed to attend though one member of the Secretariat is an old newspaper reporter and gets down a good deal. But I need not add to what you will see in my Secret Report, unless to tell you that, on the whole, I am hopeful that we may get the Irish Question out of the way of your and the President's efforts to bring about a right mutual understanding between the two democracies.

I do wish you could send me, through a safe channel, your own view of the position and prospects of that great work. Medill McCormick spent a week-end with me a short time ago and gave me the only insight I had had into that part of the American situation which interested me most — the attitude of the Middle West towards the war. I always thought — and I think you knew — that this great silent community had been wholly misjudged — that they had more character and a higher idealism than was to be found in the better-known sections of the United States. All that McCormick told me certainly confirmed this judgment. Anything you can tell me about this and other matters will be most gratefully received and, if it saved your time, which must be more

than ever occupied, I would send copies of the letter to Arthur Balfour and any other of the people whom you have taken into your confidence over here.

Please give my kindest remembrances to Mrs. House and believe me to be

Very sincerely yours

HORACE PLUNKETT

It thus came about that President Wilson was kept fully informed of the progress of the Irish crisis and the attempt to settle it. Upon the basis of this information he was able to resist the pressure brought upon him to sponsor protests against British policy in Ireland, which would certainly have ruined Anglo-American coöperation in the war. He was also able to intimate that while the Irish problem was none of America's official business, sympathy with Irish aspirations was so strong that Anglo-American relations would never be entirely right until these aspirations were satisfied. At times the situation became critical in the extreme. As Plunkett wrote in the following April, 'It is all in the lap of the gods, who must be laughing or weeping according to their mood.' But at all times the President had the authoritative information which enabled him to avoid the pitfalls surrounding our relations with Great Britain.

### III

When soon after the entrance of the United States into the war, the French and British Governments decided to send over special missions of coördination under Tardieu and Northcliffe respectively, it was natural that they should soon come into intimate contact with Colonel House. He was generally reported to be the man closest to the all-powerful President and his conferences with members of the Allied Governments during his European visits had revealed his influence. Officially he had nothing to do with the plans for



- donner aux  
 les plus  
 de la préparation, à la vérité.  
 André Tardieu Paris 28 mai 1919

ANDRÉ TARDIEU





organizing Allied demands on the United States and the arrangements by which they were met and financed. His papers, however, give us a glimpse of certain aspects of the various problems, since the Allied Commissioners laid their difficulties before him and always kept him informed of the progress of negotiations that finally led to effective inter-allied coöperation. The Tardieu Mission arrived first, led by the distinguished journalist and historian, fresh from active service at the front, now entering upon a career of administrative organization which culminated in his appointment upon the French Peace Commission and prepared him for entrance nine years later into Poincaré's ministry of all the talents.

‘On April 16, 1917, ten days after America had declared war,’ writes Tardieu, ‘it fell to my lot to direct on behalf of France our common effort. Actor and spectator for thirty-one months, I am still, ten years later, amazed at the prodigious results obtained by the two countries. Ever-memorable days, when twice the war seemed lost; days pregnant with victory; days during which the initial effort of 1917, so weak and halting, grew beneath the spur of danger, grew by the progress of mutual understanding. . . . Astounding figures tell of the effort made, the help mutually furnished. In less than eighteen months the United States armed itself to the teeth. . . . An almost unbelievable achievement if one remembers the past, the existing circumstances (both material and moral), the absence of military preparedness, the total ignorance of things European. During all this time, France and Great Britain held the front waiting for the arrival of American reënforcements, the one providing transport, the other arms for the United States Army. . . . The splendour of this achievement led people to believe that it had been spontaneous. None had been more difficult.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 215.

Tardieu confesses that upon his arrival he found the prospect discouraging. It was for him to arrange a mechanism of coördination between the needs of France and the supply-power of the United States.

‘The problem of coöperation,’ he writes, ‘how to pass from numbers to organization, from manufacture to armament, from inexperience to efficiency; and, in each of these, how to conciliate contrary necessities. The undertaking, every one admitted, might well have proved beyond human possibility. When I assumed responsibility for it, I knew that even those in whose name I was acting had no faith in its success. My Government, in bidding me God-speed, had said: “Do the best you can.”’<sup>1</sup>

During the months that followed, Tardieu, assailed by the demands of his Government, strove with the problem of securing supplies for the French army at the moment that the United States was endeavoring to build up its own upon an unprecedented scale.<sup>2</sup> As he wrote, ‘Any shortcoming in

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 217.

<sup>2</sup> Tardieu (*ibid.*, 224–25) gives the following examples of cabled orders sent from Paris to the French High Commission in Washington:

‘May 27th, from Food Ministry: “The cereal supply is threatened. Rush shipments as quickly as possible.”’

‘May 28th, from Ministry of Munitions: “Send 1000 lorries urgent.”’

‘May 29th, from Transport Ministry: “Indispensable secure immediately 30,000 tons shipping for food-supply devastated regions.”’

‘June 3d, from Ministry of Munitions: “Increase shipments copper to 10,000 tons monthly.”’

‘June 5th, from Ministry of Agriculture: “Send all haste 400 reapers binders.”’

‘June 6th, from Ministry of Marine: “Send 12,000 tons gasoline for merchant marine and 24,000 tons for navy.”’

‘June 11th, from Ministry of Munitions: “Increase shipments nitrate to 46,000 tons monthly instead of 15,000. Vital for national defense. You must arrange for this in addition to programme.”’

‘June 13th, from Ministry of Munitions: “Send 2000 tons of lead monthly.”’

‘June 16th, from Ministry of Munitions: “Send 6500 small trucks.”’

‘June 16th, from Food Ministry: “Arrange for 80,000 tons wheat in excess of programme. Most serious situation ever. Any failure or delay may prove dangerous.”’

the adjustment of effort, any breakdown in the machinery of supply, might have left our soldiers weaponless. . . . Day after day the orders came over. . . . This list reads like a nightmare. For how were all these demands to be met?' With the intensive submarine campaign, the British were forced to withdraw tonnage from the French service. 'On the docks in America, 600,000 tons of goods for France were waiting their turn for shipment. . . . There was a shortage of 490,000 tons a month. That meant a shortage of everything that was essential in food supplies and war material, the things to eat and to fight with. And I was getting cables, "Ask the United States."' <sup>1</sup>

The Tardieu Mission reached Washington on May 17, and eight days later he called upon Colonel House, who thus records the beginning of what became a lasting friendship:

'*May 25, 1917: André Tardieu, High Commissioner of France, called by appointment this afternoon. He brought letters of introduction from the French Ambassador and from our Paris Embassy. I told him he needed no introduction, since he was well known as the author of the remarkable articles on the Agadir Incident which electrified the capitals of Europe. . . . He wished to explain the needs of France, both from a military and an economic standpoint. I suggested that he write a letter covering the substance of our conversation. He is to write the letter to the President and send a copy of it to me. . . . He seems to be an exceedingly able man and I do not doubt will serve his country well.*'

*M. André Tardieu to Colonel House*

WASHINGTON, *June 13, 1917*

MY DEAR COLONEL:

I was very sorry that I could not see you again in New York, last week, nor give you further information regarding our work here.

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *op. cit.*, 224.



The two essential questions are still the question of tonnage — regarding which Mr. Denman said he could not set up any general plan earlier than within one or two weeks; and the question of the organization of war industries, regarding which it seems to me highly desirable that a final decision, which has been delayed as yet, should take place.

Through such delay a condition of uncertainty has been created as regards the American market, and the prices quoted for the orders which are now being placed by us are certainly excessive. On the other hand, I could not possibly stop our orders, there being no cessation of our needs.

I understand the reasons by which your Government's decision is being delayed. It seems absolutely necessary, however, that such a decision should be made speedily. A satisfactory distribution of orders and the regularity of deliveries are unavoidably depending upon this decision.

The question is not less important from the point of view of prices. You told me that, in your opinion, the armies of the Allies ought to pay the same prices as the American army. M. McAdoo, when last in Washington, told me that he agreed upon this principle; that a general requisition law was not possible, though; but that by means of friendly negotiations he hoped that an equality of conditions could be achieved. . . .

As regards tonnage, I would like that the American Government should promise now to let us have a definite proportion of the German tonnage seized in Brazil. I do not wish to start in Rio a negotiation which might counteract the negotiations of the U.S. Government. But it seems that by handling the matter yourselves alone in Rio, you could secure a certainty which would prove of great value in reference to our shipping within the next few months. I would like to know your own opinion regarding the matter.

As to military affairs two points, which I believe to be

essential, are still being held in suspense. In the present war there is no other way of learning the practice of war than making war. All school methods have been upset by the facts, and fighting is the only school of any value. I have been realizing that directly myself during my two years at the front.

Therefore, I deem it is of the utmost importance that a sufficient number of American officers (not including officers on General Pershing's Staff) should, as soon as possible, spend, in France, a period of three months with our fighting units (Infantry Divisions or Brigades, or Artillery Staffs) and provide, therefore, for the American troops, either in the United States or in France, instructors taught and trained by the reality of war.

To which Mr. Baker answers that you have only a small number of officers, which is true enough. But, by sending officers to be with our fighting units, you could within a few months secure a gain of one hundred per cent as regards the amount of time required for instruction.

Moreover, you could send over very soon young men from American universities who are now in the training camps; this would spare time as well. Two months at the front means more than six months in a training camp. You ought to bear always in mind that since 1914 we promoted to officers 85,000 privates, and that they have become excellent officers.

Such is the true method to be applied to a national and democratic army. We have been, ourselves, hesitating a long time before adopting it, on account of old routine traditions which were, on the whole, German doctrines. I wish that you might profit by our own mistakes. . . .

I am looking forward, my dear Colonel, to your coming some time to Washington, and I beg you to be good enough to let me know about it.

I was so highly pleased with our conversation last week,

that I would be glad if we could meet again, as you can do much towards bringing about our common victory.

I am, my dear Colonel, with highest regard,

Very truly yours

ANDRÉ TARDIEU

#### IV

Shortly after Tardieu's arrival, House received word from Sir Cecil Spring-Rice that the British Government had also decided to send a War Mission to the United States for the coördination of British war activities. As chief of the Mission they selected no less a person than Lord Northcliffe, who was qualified for this difficult task as much by his superabundant energy as by his conviction that American resources were necessary to turn the scales of war in favor of the Allies. His functions were outlined in a memorandum which Wiseman gave to House on May 31.

#### *Memorandum upon Proposed War Mission*

'The War Cabinet think it desirable to have some system of generally supervising and coördinating the work of the representatives of the various British departments in the United States who are employed there on matters connected with shipping, food supply, munitions, and War Office and Admiralty business. If there is no such coördination, the representatives of these departments would waste much valuable time and power, and especially would interfere with each other by mutual competition.

'In view of these circumstances and of this danger which the War Cabinet consider as serious, they consider it essential that for some months to come they should have in the United States an energetic and influential man of good business capacity and wide knowledge for purposes of general supervision and coördination. Mr. Balfour's mission has done excellent work, but it is strongly felt that much still



remains to be done, especially with a view to bringing home to the United States Government the realities of the present war situation, and the necessity of immediate active and strenuous coöperation in the war, with the least delay possible.

‘The War Cabinet therefore proposed that they should have a representative in the United States charged with the duty of ensuring to the best of his ability that all possible measures are taken in order to render America’s resources available in the most effective manner and with the least possible delay.

‘He would have no diplomatic duties. Diplomatic relations would remain in the same hands as heretofore, and the War Cabinet representative would apply to the British Embassy should he require diplomatic support for the purpose of carrying out the duties connected with his mission.

‘In the opinion of the War Cabinet Lord Northcliffe is suited for such an appointment, and they propose making the appointment at once with the duties above enumerated. . . .’

Northcliffe arrived early in June and remained in the United States until November, perhaps the darkest period of the war and certainly the most confused and discouraging from the standpoint of America’s war effort. The cables which he sent to the British War Cabinet, copies of many of which he gave to Colonel House, reflect the same difficulties which Tardieu had to face.

A nation like the United States, unaccustomed to centralized control and unprepared for war contingencies, could not in the nature of things suddenly attempt to place itself upon a belligerent footing without producing confusion. It was the business of the Allied agencies in the United States to stimulate America to increased production, which of itself led to more confusion; they must also secure for themselves all the



supplies possible, and they must persuade the United States Treasury to lend them the money to pay for them. They found themselves competing with each other, since Allied demands were as yet uncoördinated, and frequently with the United States Government itself, which requisitioned ships, raw materials, and manufactured products upon which the Allied agents counted. They faced the prospect of increased prices, since there was as yet no centralized control over American industries. They must avoid all friction, since they were dependent upon the good temper of the American Treasury. On the other hand, the American Treasury had no safe guide as to which loans were most essential nor as to how priority should be determined.

To this task Northcliffe brought interminable energy and complete disregard of the impossible, gilded with never-failing good temper. 'You may rely upon me never to use minatory language,' Northcliffe cabled to Mr. Balfour towards the close of his mission. 'I have been dealing with these people for thirty years. Nothing can be gained here by threats, much by flattery and self-abnegation.' With all his experience in a life well stocked with problems, he confessed that he had never confronted a task crammed with so many difficulties. 'The task is immense,' he cabled home, 'and ever growing. I have never worked so hard before.'

Northcliffe was fully convinced of the vital importance of bringing the whole strength of the United States to bear upon the settlement of the war; he constantly impressed upon the British War Cabinet the need of arranging the closest sort of coöperation with America.

*Lord Northcliffe to Mr. Winston Churchill*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, *July 27, 1917*

I have long believed war can only be won from here. The position is most difficult and delicate. Sir William Wiseman,

Chief of our Military Intelligence here, should reach England in a few days. He is the only person, English or American, who has access to Wilson and House at all times. He had an hour and a half with Wilson last week and a day with House. The Administration is entirely run by these two men. Wilson's power is absolute and House is a wise assistant. Both are pro-English.

NORTHCLIFFE

House and Northcliffe came into touch soon after the latter's arrival, and there began a personal friendship which lasted until the latter's death. On his visits to England, House had met the great publisher casually, but evidently failed to take true measure of his size. He was soon to confess that he had been mistaken in his earlier estimate:

'Northcliffe has never received the credit due him in the winning of the war,' wrote House after the Peace Conference. 'He was tireless in his endeavors to stimulate the courage and energy of the Allies, and he succeeded in bringing them to a realization of the mighty task they had on their hands. He was among the first to grasp the significance of President Wilson's philippic against the German military autocracy, and the distinction he made between the Junkers and the German people. He caused these utterances of the American President to be sent into Germany by countless thousands, and did more than any single man, other than Wilson himself, to break down the enemy's morale behind the lines.'

The references to Northcliffe in House's papers in the summer of 1917 all reflect increasing admiration and affection. 'Northcliffe is doing good work,' he cabled to England on August 11, 'and is getting along well with every one.'

'When Northcliffe left,' House wrote in his diary two days later, 'I asked Pollen<sup>1</sup> his opinion of his ability. He said he

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Pollen, naval expert and critic.

knew Northcliffe well and liked him. . . . That his talent consisted in the newspaperman's instinct to know where to go for advice. I do not agree with him in this estimate. I think Northcliffe's success is due to his force more than to anything else. He is a dominating man with boundless energy. I like him the more I see of him.'

'He does what he promises,' House wrote two months later, towards the close of Northcliffe's mission, 'and he rings true.'

Lord Northcliffe, on his side, evidently placed full confidence in House and found it advisable to seek his counsel and aid. He cabled Wiseman on August 26 of a certain matter that demanded speed: 'I am doing everything through House, who acts remarkably quickly. For example yesterday, on leaving Washington at four o'clock, I sent him a message through Miller,<sup>1</sup> and on my arrival at New York at nine o'clock I found a reply message awaiting me.' Sir Campbell Stuart, Military Secretary to the British War Mission, who, through tact and keen appreciation of all the elements in a difficult situation, contributed largely to its success, writes as follows:

'Lord Northcliffe worked in close touch with Colonel House. He told me that he regarded him as one of the wisest men he had ever met. Through him he kept in communication with the Administration. In addition he received very great assistance from Sir William Wiseman, the head of the British Intelligence Service in the United States.'<sup>2</sup>

Northcliffe brought to House copies of many of his most important reports so that he might make clear the difficulties of coöperation; he brought also matters which demanded the immediate notice of President Wilson and which might be

<sup>1</sup> David Hunter Miller.

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript memorandum given to C. S. by Sir Campbell Stuart.

delayed if they went through the regular official channels. This was true of the important analysis of the submarine situation in August, and of the acute crisis that resulted when the United States began to take over the output of the shipyards, even requisitioning tonnage already contracted for by the Allies.

*Lord Northcliffe to Colonel House*

NEW YORK, August 3, 1917

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE,

I have received a cablegram from Sir W. saying that my Government have at length prepared an analysis giving the facts about the submarine losses, presumably for presentation to the President.

Would you kindly give me your advice as to whether I should submit it to you for your consideration and report to the President, or whether I should take it myself direct to him.<sup>1</sup>

I have just returned from being well broiled at Washington. I was rather amused to find that the subject of the heat there is rather like that of earthquakes at San Francisco, and the local papers had the audacity to suggest that the District of Columbia as regards the heat question is no wickedder than any other part of the United States.

With kind regards to Mrs. House,

Yours sincerely

NORTHCLIFFE

NEW YORK, August 25, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE,

Our people are evidently very agitated about this most delicate and difficult question of the British ships now building here. The Censor is wisely stopping reference to it in the

<sup>1</sup> The memorandum was taken direct to the President and a copy sent to House.



English newspapers, but that it will be raised in Parliament is very obvious. That it will create a very bad impression in Europe is equally obvious. Is there not some possible compromise? . . .

My instructions are to point out that my Government will keenly feel the blow, which will be a very serious one to England, if these ships are taken over by your Government.

In the belief that the ships would not be transferred, public statements have been made by the Prime Minister in which these ships have been included in his estimates of British tonnage.

In view of the losses already sustained, the large proportion of our tonnage in direct war services and the complete subordination of our trade through war necessities, we cannot replace these vessels from British sources, and their loss must embarrass our military and naval activities.

It is important that the United States Government should realize that we made arrangements to buy vessels before the United States entered the war and that we stopped directly such purchases might have become embarrassing to United States.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The requisitioning of these ships naturally created a serious and an unpleasant situation, and aroused warm protests especially from the Australians. It raised the question of prestige, an additional complication in the problem of coöperation. Thus the offer of the United States to lease the requisitioned vessels to Australia, on condition that they carried the American flag and American crews, was unsatisfactory, since in the mind of Premier Hughes of Australia it would be a 'blow against the naval and maritime supremacy of the British Empire.' Of greater immediate significance was the fear lest such requisitioning should form a precedent.

'It is the opinion of influential people in Washington,' cabled Northcliffe to Wiseman on August 26, 'that having made no provision for war, the American Government may take advantage of various contracts we have here, to supply their army and navy with what they want. I believe that neither the President nor House like this sort of thing, and I am hoping to get some kind of compromise about the ships so as to avoid the establishment of a precedent of confiscation.'

The vigorous protests of the Allies succeeded in saving a portion of the requisitioned tonnage.

My Government places itself entirely in the hands of the President. . . .

Yours sincerely

NORTHCLIFFE

Even more difficult were the problems resulting from competition with the other Allies for securing American supplies. They did not present their demands as a coördinated unit, and what they secured often seemed to them to depend upon chance. Northcliffe, as a veteran journalist with perfect faith in the value of news, believed that the British were at a disadvantage because they failed to emphasize the importance of Great Britain's military effort. Extracts from his cables indicate the close connection in his mind between complete war news and American supplies.

'August 15, 1917: X and Y,' he wrote, 'are naturally working for themselves. . . . They visit House about once a month. . . . We have no British Military Representative who has seen anything of the war. The American soldiers in France write home only about the French army. Nothing is heard of our fleet. House assured me that the President was absolutely aware of the great part we had played in the war.

'House said: "You ought to send to Washington a British soldier of high distinction and war experience. We don't want a military mission, but it would be advantageous to us if you send such an officer and if he were afterwards reënforced by officers in various branches of the service with technical experience gained recently in the field."'<sup>1</sup>

'All this has a direct bearing on the money situation and upon McAdoo's position before Congress.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Wilson, who later became Chief of the British Imperial Staff, was selected by the British War Committee as chief of such a mission. 'I flatly refused to go,' wrote Wilson in his diary. Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir William Robertson*, II, 11.

<sup>2</sup> See *infra*, p. 114.

*'August 21, 1917:* Things are not going well with us at Washington. Geoffrey Butler considers and I agree that we need the visit of some very prominent war characters. I have sent Smuts a cablegram which he will show you if you ask. The highest authorities here cannot understand why we do not make our case better known. Wiseman will . . . tell you that certain leaders are with us and if it were not for them the French would get everything. . . . I wish you would use every effort with those concerned to release Smuts for a six weeks' visit here. He could easily say things that would be difficult for an Englishman to say.

*'September 1, 1917:* The kind of problem that faces one every morning is typified by the following which reaches me from War Department in Washington: "We should be glad if you would send us for our information whatever material you might receive concerning the progress of the war and matters of general interest for the confidential information of our Chief of Staff and Secretary of War." This is a matter that obviously should have been taken up . . . directly the United States entered the war. The result of this kind of neglect on our part is that the United States Government has no notion of what we are doing in the war. Newspapers give the impression that the war is being fought by France and Canada. At a popular theatre here one of the scenes depicted nightly is of Canadian troops returning from the battlefield to their meals which are being cooked for them by British soldiers. This ignorance indirectly affects all our financial efforts at Washington. . . . It would be well if you spoke to General Maurice. He issued a statement yesterday which appeared only in very few papers giving the proportion of the British and Canadian troops in the war. Such statements have no effect because they are drowned by the daily accounts of the deeds of the brave Manitobans and Montrealers, the wonderful feats of the French flying men and the huge captures of prisoners by the Italians.



*'September 8, 1917: There is no German propaganda against the French. The whole Irish and German propaganda is to the effect that we are getting all the money and are doing little of the work. We do our utmost to counteract these impressions by means of my personal influence with friends on the American Press, but we have far to go before we shall have placed ourselves on an equality with the French here, and to do so we must at least be as well equipped, scientifically and otherwise, as they are.'*

Northcliffe not merely used his influence with friends on the American Press, but exerted himself in every way to come into close contact with the leaders of industry, so as to hasten and simplify the delivery of supplies for the British. When a misunderstanding arose over the offer of Henry Ford to send six thousand tractors to the British Food Production Department at cost, Northcliffe himself settled the matter and incidentally discovered in the great American industrialist a personality which piqued his interest and admiration.

*'I have endeavored to get into touch with Ford,' he wrote on October 6, 'but he has twice put me off. It may be necessary for me to go to Detroit and eat humble pie, and if so will do so gladly. Ford is entirely indifferent to financial considerations.*

*'October 14, 1917: I have no desire for further long journeys, but it is considered important by those who are behind the scenes that I should go out to Detroit, and I propose arriving there Tuesday or Wednesday next. Edison, an intimate friend of Ford and an old friend of mine, has arranged matters. . . .*

*'October 17, 1917: I spent yesterday with Ford. The construction of the tractors is being pressed forward with immense energy. . . . Ford is not in the tractor business for*



money, but because he believes it will revolutionize the home life of England, to which country he is attached. The arrival of the tractors in England should be treated in the American way, and if possible, the Prime Minister should be cinematographed with them. . . . I have seen many tractors, but in my personal judgment the Ford tractor is as great a revolution in cheap efficiency as the Ford motor car. Ford, who looks like the Bishop of London, is an anti-militarist ascetic and must not be treated as a commercial man. . . .

‘Ford wants a copy of Cobbett’s “Rural Rides,” and of Tennyson’s “Letters,” which were published some years ago by his son. Please send the books direct to him at Detroit, with my compliments, in case I should be on my way home by the time the books get there.’

Northcliffe had the satisfaction of seeing the American effort acquire momentum during the period of his mission. ‘These people are getting deeply into the war,’ he cabled to his brother on September 7, ‘and are most resolute. Things are running more smoothly now.’ He had also the satisfaction of seeing the British War Cabinet emphasize more definitely the necessity of close coöperation with the United States. In August Sir William Wiseman cabled to him:

‘The Government every day realizes more fully the importance of the United States and are coming to the point of view which I know you hold, namely, that America must be treated as our most important ally. There is, however, need for this truth to be kept constantly before the Cabinet, owing to the great distance of America and the fact that members of the Government have little personal knowledge of Washington affairs. I believe that I have impressed the Government with the vital importance of keeping the President fully and frankly informed about everything and also the necessity of prompt replies to your telegrams.’

Lord Northcliffe not merely realized the potential resources of the United States, but from the beginning insisted that if a proper mechanism of coöperation were devised American supplies would be forthcoming in time; he insisted also that unless the Allies presented their demands for money and supplies in coördinated form, the confusion resultant upon the attempt to speed up American effort might result in disaster. This was precisely the conclusion reached by Tardieu, with whom, as Sir Campbell Stuart reports, 'throughout his stay Lord Northcliffe worked hand in hand.' The need of such coördination in Allied demands became especially obvious in the financial problems of the summer of 1917, upon which the papers of Colonel House throw some light.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINANCE AND SUPPLIES

Before the American soldier, the American dollar turned the tide.

*André Tardieu, in France and America*

#### I

As the student turns over the bulky manuscripts relating to the interests and activities of Colonel House during the war, he is surprised, perhaps, to note the number and size of those relating to financial problems. For years, House had given up active interest in business, which he confessed bored him, and had centered his attention on problems of government. He was certainly not regarded as an expert in financial affairs; it was so long since he had been to Wall Street, or even below Twenty-Third Street, that he could not remember when, if ever, he had visited the financial center of the United States. Nevertheless, in his files are bundles of papers bearing witness to long conferences with the financial representatives of the Allied Powers, and numerous detailed and quite technical memoranda that passed between him and Lord Northcliffe, or the British Ambassador, or Mr. Balfour.

Most of the financial and supply problems of the war could doubtless have been settled with comparative ease by the business experts of each country if they could have been given a free hand without the intrusion of political factors. Such was not the case; international difficulties and jealousies created situations which disturbed the statesmen, who, with justification or not, felt it necessary to interfere. Colonel House, whose one desire in the summer of 1917 was to assist the President in the development of the diplomatic offensive against German morale, found himself brought into touch with various financial questions which, simple as they

might seem to financiers, unquestionably brought the keenest worry to the politicians.

It is far from the purpose of this chapter to sketch the financial history of America's relations with the Allies, of which the papers of Colonel House would doubtless fail to give a comprehensive view. It is important, however, to note his connection with them, since the financial difficulties of the summer led directly to the American War Mission of the autumn, which he was chosen to head.

The essential facts of the financial history of 1917 were simple: The Allies were compelled to ask for loans from the United States of a size which frightened the American Treasury, and which, even if the credits should be given, might be difficult to justify to the American taxpayer. The war was costing sums which were quite inconceivable to the ordinary citizen, and the Allies had begun to scrape the bottom of the chest. Unless the United States helped out freely, the military effort in the field could not be maintained. As Lord Northcliffe cabled late in the summer, the American Government was 'appalled by magnitude of financial task. They are complete masters of the situation as regards ourselves, Canada, France, Italy, and Russia. Loan to us strongly opposed by powerful section of Congress. If loan stops, war stops.'<sup>1</sup>

The demands of the Allies were probably justified by the extent and cost of the military undertaking, but they were not understood by the American people. On the other hand, the Allies were too busy dealing with vital and critical questions in the theater of war to give time to a complete and reiterated explanation of the situation. The British financial representatives in the United States were men of unusual ability. Sir Hardman Lever had formerly been financial Secretary to the Treasury and possessed wide knowledge of American business affairs; Sir Richard Crawford had had

<sup>1</sup> H. Wickham Steed, *Through Thirty Years*, II, 143.



long experience as a commissioner of customs and as adviser to the Turkish Ministry of Finance. Together they formed an admirable combination. But the problem involved political factors which could hardly be met by officials who had been given purely financial functions. No special mandate had been given to Northcliffe to look after financial affairs and he told House that he did not regard himself as qualified to supervise financial relations. What was necessary, if one may summarize from the House Papers, was a man of political experience, supported by an adequate military, naval, and technical staff, who could explain to President Wilson and other Government officials the economic and war strategy of the Allies, and translate those policies into terms of money and supplies, so that the American Government would know what the Allies planned, and why their effort must cost so much, and what might be expected from the vast expenditure contemplated.<sup>1</sup>

The Administration at Washington was further confused by the lack of organization in Allied demands for credit and supplies. It was not until August that a purchasing board was created. Previous to the entrance of the United States into the war, the firm of J. P. Morgan and Company had acted with great success as purchasing and financial agents for the British and French Governments. Mr. E. R. Stettinius took charge of the coördination and purchase of supplies, as distinct from purely financial questions, and created within a short period an organization of such efficiency that Ludendorff was quoted as stating that Stettinius was worth an army corps to the Allies.

With the entrance of the United States into the war, it was obviously impossible for a private firm to continue as purchasing agent for the Allied Governments. On April 3, J. P.

<sup>1</sup> Colonel House cabled to Mr. Balfour early in July that the chief difficulty was 'largely brought about by the lack of some directing mind here.'

Morgan and Company suggested that the British take up the question of obtaining supplies and making purchases through the United States Government; it was clear that the business of the British Government ought to be transacted by its direct representatives, working in conjunction with the various departments of the United States Government, in an effort to obtain the benefit of the more favorable prices and terms that could be secured only through the exercise of governmental control. The bankers offered to facilitate the transfer of the buying to any organization formed for the purpose, and on at least three occasions urged the creation of a staff to take over the work that Morgan had been doing; but the British found it impossible to avoid delays, so that from April until the end of August the whole purchasing system of the British was to a large extent marking time.

It was during this period that the anxiety of the Allies to secure from the United States a guarantee of regular monthly credits was most keen. They had to face the increasing costs of the war; they had also in mind the liquidation of their loan with J. P. Morgan and Company, amounting to about \$400,000,000, which represented the various amounts paid from time to time to American manufacturers and merchants for the account of the British Government, less shipments of gold and proceeds from the sale of American securities and British notes. Although the loan has been generally referred to as the 'Morgan Loan,' it was divided among a great many banks and banking institutions, of which twenty-six were in New York and fourteen in Philadelphia. More than half of the loan was at this time divided among banks other than Morgan's. It was secured by American securities of known value. The liquidation of the loan was expected by the participating banking institutions on or about July 1, the British understanding that it would be a first call on the loan to be made them by the United States Treasury.

Mr. McAdoo was anxious to help the Allies with credits so far as possible. From April 1 to July 14 the United States advanced to Great Britain close to £140,000,000 and to the other allies £90,000,000, altogether well over a billion dollars. He was unable, however, to promise regular monthly credits at the rate desired by the Allies. Nor could he agree to the suggestion that indebtedness of the British Government incurred before the United States entered the war should be liquidated through loans of the United States Government; he had engaged himself in a parliamentary agreement to the effect that credits voted by Congress should not be used for that purpose. This was carefully explained to the British War Mission in July: 'House said,' Northcliffe cabled to Mr. Lloyd George, 'that the whole forthcoming winter will be spent in Congressional wranglings about finance, and for this reason McAdoo must be in a position to make perfectly clear that the money of the people of the United States was not being used for the benefit of . . . Wall Street and the Money Power to which the Democracy so strongly objects.'

The situation seemed less desperate, perhaps, to the financial experts than it did to Allied political leaders, for it was likely that supplies would be exhausted before credits could be used. Thus in October, Lord Reading cabled to England: 'What will save the United States Treasury, as it has saved ours in the past, will be the material limitation on what it is possible to buy. Goods will not in fact be forthcoming on a sufficient scale to absorb the vast credits to which the Departments and the Allies are becoming entitled.' None the less, the political leaders in Europe, as well as Northcliffe in the United States, were constantly caught in the nightmare that the loans would be refused: 'If loan stops, war stops.' Hence the frequent appeals to House, asking his help in explaining their need to the Administration.





PRESIDENT WILSON AND COLONEL HOUSE





## II

One of the most interesting appeals came at the end of June. Through some misunderstanding the British Ambassador gathered that in order to liquidate the Morgan loans on the date desired, July 1, it would be necessary for the British to sell collateral. The securities were perfectly sound, of the highest character; but with American Government loans overhanging the market, it would be difficult to sell American securities in large amounts at satisfactory prices. What chiefly disturbed the British leaders, however, was their fear that if the news of the selling of collateral were noised abroad, the effect would inevitably be disastrous to exchange and to the credit of the British Government. The British Secretary for Foreign Affairs evidently regarded the moment as critical.

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, June 29, 1917

For reasons fully explained to Page here and to Spring-Rice in Washington, we seem on the verge of a financial disaster which would be worse than defeat in the field. If we cannot keep up exchange neither we nor our Allies can pay our dollar debts. We should be driven off the gold basis, and purchases from the U.S.A. would immediately cease and the Allies' credit would be shattered. A consequence which would be of incalculable gravity may be upon us on Monday next if nothing effective is done in the mean time. You know I am not an alarmist, but this is really serious. I hope you will do what you can in proper quarters to avert calamity.<sup>1</sup>

BALFOUR

<sup>1</sup> It should be clearly understood that this appeal, as well as that printed on p. 106, was made in behalf of the Allies as a whole and not of Great Britain alone.

'I have been at the telephone continuously for hours,' wrote House in his diary, 'talking first to the State Department, then to New York, trying to unravel the tangle.'

*Sir William Wiseman to Sir Eric Drummond for Mr. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, June 29, 1917

... I have communicated message to House, who is near Boston, over secret Government telephone lines to his house, which I am allowed to use.

I have use of similar wire to Washington, and have discussed situation with Polk.

On receiving your message House immediately telephoned Washington. He believes matters can be arranged and wishes me to assure you that he is devoting his entire time until crisis is averted....

WISEMAN

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 29, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Things began to break yesterday afternoon in British quarters. Spring-Rice is at Woods Hole and McAdoo at Buena Vista and the machinery became clogged. As usual, Sir William took hold and is trying to-day to see what can be done.

Northcliffe received a message from Lloyd George to come here and advise with me before moving further. He was ready to take the ten o'clock train this morning when I received, through Sir William, the cable from Balfour which I sent you by Lansing. I therefore advised Northcliffe to go to Washington immediately rather than come here, which he has done.

By putting together what I gather from Washington and

Sir William, the trouble that has come about concerning finances is largely a matter of misunderstanding. . . .

The British understood that we would take care of certain Russian obligations they have been carrying. They claim if they had not been under this impression they would have arranged to take care of the matter in a different way.

What they need is \$35,000,000 on Monday, \$100,000,000 on Thursday, and \$185,000,000 a month for two months beginning ten days from next Thursday.

This is a staggering amount and indicates the load Great Britain has been carrying for her allies. It seems to me that we should have some definite understanding with England as to what money she will need in the future and how far she can count upon us.

It seems absurd to be giving her comparatively small amounts, the frequent publication of which make a bad impression on our people. Would they not stand one large amount better than these lesser amounts constantly brought to their attention?

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

On July 5, the Foreign Office cabled: 'Balfour is most grateful to House for his intervention. The results are already apparent.' But the situation as a whole continued quite unsatisfactory to both sides. The excitement of the Foreign Office may have been quite justifiable and based upon a genuine peril to British credit, as the political leaders believed; or it may have been the merest flurry resulting from a misunderstanding, as the financiers believed. In either case it was important that Allied requests for credits be organized in such a way as to make misunderstanding impossible. Colonel House urged the desirability of sending from England a financier of high political position.



*Colonel House to President Wilson*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
*July 11, 1917*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Since Balfour's cable I have been keeping in intimate touch with the financial differences between the British Government and the Treasury Department and I am glad to tell you that everything seems on the road to an amicable adjustment. . . .

I have brought McAdoo and Wiseman in touch and since Sir William is sympathetic with McAdoo's point of view I believe another such crisis can be avoided in the future. It will be necessary, however, for the British to send out another financial man. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

A few days after sending this letter, Colonel House received a visit from Lord Northcliffe at Magnolia. The chief of the British War Mission laid before him the statistics of British expenditure since the United States entered the war and the vital need of regular financial assistance from the United States. He recognized the help thus far given, which in a period of about fourteen weeks amounted to over a billion dollars to the various Allies (229 million pounds). For the same period, however, Great Britain had advanced to the Allies 193 million pounds.<sup>1</sup> The United States, moreover, had limited its assistance to the expenditure incurred by the Allies within the United States. Great Britain had been unable to adopt this attitude, but had supported the burden of

<sup>1</sup> British advances to other Allies (April 1–July 14, 1917): £193,849,000.  
 United States advances to other Allies (April 1–July 14, 1917): £90,000,000.

United States advances to British (April 1–July 14, 1917): £139,245,000.

Thus the net advances of Great Britain amounted to about 54 million pounds; of the United States about 229 million pounds.

Allied expenditure in various parts of the world. Without this support, the Allies would have been unable to obtain supplies of food and munitions which were essential to the prosecution of the war. Great Britain was still financing the purchases of Russia in the United States. The total expenditure of the British since the United States entered the war was more than 800 million pounds, and they had received from the American Government slightly less than 140 million pounds in loans. Furthermore, during the years previous to the entrance of the United States the British had spent over four and a quarter billion pounds, making a total of more than five billion to the middle of July, 1917.

‘It is after having supported an expenditure of this magnitude for three years,’ Northcliffe told Colonel House, ‘that the United Kingdom ventures to appeal to the United States Government for sympathetic consideration in financial discussion, where the excessive urgency of her need and the precariousness of her position may somewhat impart a tone of insistence to her requests for assistance which would be out of place in ordinary circumstances. . . .’

‘Our resources available for payments in America are exhausted. Unless the United States Government can meet in full our expenses in America, including exchange, the whole financial fabric of the alliance will collapse. This conclusion will be a matter not of months but of days.

‘The question is one of which it is necessary to take a large view. If matters continue on the same basis as during the last few weeks a financial disaster of the first magnitude cannot be avoided. In the course of August the enemy will receive the encouragement of which he stands in so great need, at the moment of the war when perhaps he needs it most.’

At the same time Mr. Balfour again cabled to Colonel House, asking him to impress upon the President the vital

importance which the Allies attached to their request. What they needed was the assurance of an immediate advance sufficient to cover their August purchases and the arrangement thereafter of a programme of regular loans.

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS

July 20, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I have just received the following cable from Balfour:

'Communication of the utmost importance and urgency with regard to financial position was made to the United States Ambassador to-day with request that he telegraph it *in extenso* to State Department. I should be most grateful if you could ensure that it receives the personal attention of the President and for any assistance you can give as matter is really vital. I am sure nothing short of full aid which we ask will avoid a catastrophe.'

I have answered that I would immediately call your attention to the urgency of the matter.

McAdoo intended coming here on Thursday but was detained. He hopes to come next week. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

III

The hesitation which the United States Treasury displayed in giving immediate and complete satisfaction to the Allied appeal was not entirely unnatural. Mr. McAdoo was responsible to the American taxpayers and he must be able to show that all the funds advanced were for essential expenditures, without which there was danger that the war might be lost. Confusion in the demands of the Allies was such as almost to give the appearance of a scramble for priority of funds and supplies. Before consenting to embark

upon a policy that would lead to loans of unprecedented size, the Treasury insisted that Allied requisitions, whether for money or materials, must be coördinated.

Mr. McAdoo asked, accordingly, for the creation of some sort of interallied finance council, or purchasing board, which would certify to him the absolute necessity of what was asked and indicate the priority of needs.

The situation was clearly expressed in a memorandum that was drafted at this time by Sir William Wiseman in conjunction with Colonel House, the sense of which was approved by Lord Northcliffe.

*Wiseman Memorandum on Finance and Supplies*

‘The demands for money, shipping, and raw materials come from the Allies separately and without reference to one another. Each urges that their own particular need is paramount, and no one in America can tell where the next demand will come from and for how much it will be. The Administration [at Washington] are too far from the war and have not sufficient information to judge the merits of these demands.

‘At present, confusion reigns not only in the Administration Departments, but in the public mind. There is, on the one hand, a feeling that some of the money and material is not needed for strictly war purposes, and, on the other hand, some genuine alarm is felt that even the resources of the United States will not be able to bear the strain. German agents at work in the United States have seized upon this situation and are using it to the full. Their activities are aimed at confusing the issues and delaying the time when the full weight and power of America can be brought into the war. They are encouraging the idea that it would be better to conserve American resources for the protection of America, rather than dissipate them in a quarrel with Europe.’



The necessity for coördinating Allied demands through an interallied finance council was earnestly emphasized by President Wilson. Sir William was invited to confer with the President, who laid stress upon the importance of coördinating Allied demands and indicated that his solution was the plan suggested by Mr. McAdoo.

‘Wilson urged strongly,’ Wiseman reported to House and Northcliffe, ‘that more information, both as to actual financial needs and general policy of the Allies, must be given to the United States Government. He pointed out that there was much confusion and some competition in the demands of the various Allies. Specifically, so far as the British are concerned, he pointed out that there was no one who could speak with sufficient financial authority to discuss the whole situation, both financial and political, with the Secretary of the Treasury. All these things should be remedied as soon as possible.

‘He was thoroughly in favor of the scheme proposed by McAdoo for a council in Paris. This council, composed of representatives of the Allies, should determine what was needed in the way of supplies and money from America. It should also determine the urgency of each requisition and give proper priority. I suggested that such a council should be composed of the military and naval commanders, or their representatives, and that the United States should be represented on it. Wilson did not seem to have any objection, but thought it was unnecessary for the United States to be represented on it until they had their own portion of the front to look after and a large force in Europe.’<sup>1</sup>

The failure of the Allied Governments to accept and act upon Mr. McAdoo’s recommendation for an interallied coun-

<sup>1</sup> Another indication that as early as July, 1917, President Wilson expected to see a large American expeditionary force in Europe.

cil was doubtless due in part to the fear that the financial autonomy of London and Paris might be sacrificed. It was also due to the press of affairs in Europe, which left small leisure to study the important factors that underlay America's relations with the Allies. Both Northcliffe and Tardieu worked to impress upon their Governments the necessity of meeting the American demand for a general system of co-ordination in matters of finance and supply, but without immediate results.

M. Tardieu and the deputy commissioner for Franco-American affairs, M. de Billy, came to Magnolia on various occasions to discuss with Colonel House ways and means of creating a complete interallied organization. They realized clearly the unfortunate effects of British delay in arranging for a purchasing organization to take the place of that which had been carried on by J. P. Morgan and Company, as well as the further confusion in American industry that resulted upon our entrance into the war, with the consequent danger of increase in prices. They recognized equally the fact that the Allies had quite as much to gain as the United States from a system of general coördination.

### *Tardieu Memorandum on Finance and Supplies*

‘The old organization has disappeared and the new one has not been set up as yet. Whence a general condition of uncertainty concerning prices as well as terms of delivery. . . .

‘Supplying the Allies with considerable advances of money, the United States may properly ask to be assured that money so advanced is actually and fully devoted to war needs.

‘The Allies, working in coöperation with the United States may also properly ask that, as regards the negotiating of their orders, they should be protected as to prices against any exaggerated claims from the producers. . . .

‘Assurances should be given to the American Government

that the orders of the Allies are not such as to hamper the industries which are necessary to the United States.

‘Assurances should be given to the Allies that the carrying out of the orders in the United States shall not be hampered or delayed by orders from the American Government.’

Tardieu’s solution was the utilization of existing inter-allied bureaus, which should be developed so as to give the American Government complete information as to the essential demands of the Allies. It would be necessary for the American Government to take complete control of American industry. The interallied conference ‘would provide the Government of the United States with a basis for the industrial and financial control over all orders placed in the United States. . . . The United States would acquire a deep and detailed knowledge of the needs and specifications of the Allies, and as soon as their own organization was completed, they would be in a position to undertake the whole direction of American war industries and could substitute their own organization without a break for the former purchasing machinery of the Allies. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of July, feeling confident of the support of M. Tardieu and of Northcliffe, Mr. McAdoo addressed a formal memorandum to the Allied Commissioners, in which he declared the necessity of escaping from existing confusion by the creation of an organization that would correlate demands upon the United States and furnish some basis for indicating priority of needs. United States officials, he stated, were being forced to decide questions of which they had little first-hand knowledge. The Allies should first get together, work out a programme deciding the proper needs of each,

<sup>1</sup> The general principles of M. Tardieu’s plan were finally followed so as to meet the necessities of the problem. Control over American industry was ultimately taken by the President and exercised through the War Industries Board; interallied councils were set up to determine the needs of the Allies and the priorities of their demands.



and present it to our Government as a whole. In this way there would be no necessity for continual applications by each country for comparatively small amounts and our Government would be relieved from the decision as to which application was the most vital.

A conference of Allied representatives met in Paris to discuss the McAdoo memorandum, and there drafted a plan which in its main lines met the desires of the United States. But ratification of this scheme by the Allied Governments was refused for the moment, largely because of their objection to the extent of the powers which it would confer upon the commissioners. The creation of the interallied council on finances and purchases was thus postponed.

#### IV

This delay in the ratification of Mr. McAdoo's plan naturally carried with it an element of uncertainty in the discussions over the regular advancement of American funds to the Allies. The anxiety of the latter was intense. Because of his relations with the Secretary of the Treasury on the one hand and with the Allied Commissioners on the other, Colonel House was constantly invited to place the Allied point of view before the Government. On July 23 he wrote to Northcliffe: 'I am doing everything I can to help solve this difficult problem and I hope an understanding may soon be reached.' He urged upon Mr. McAdoo that, while waiting for the establishment of interallied coördination, it was impossible to refuse the requests of the Allies for immediate advances. It was with obvious satisfaction that, on July 24, Northcliffe cabled to Mr. Bonar Law that Mr. McAdoo had gone up to Magnolia to see the Colonel, and that it was likely that the advance for August would be made. So it proved and the crisis of the moment was tided over. At the same time, at House's suggestion, Wiseman was sent to London to explain the necessity for closer coördination. President Wilson and



Northcliffe commissioned him to urge that a financier in a high political position be sent to the United States and to insist upon the necessity of the interallied council on finances and purchases.

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 3, 1917

I have just had a long conference with Mr. Balfour. He says your help in the whole situation and particularly in the recent difficulty was the factor which saved a very real disaster. He is intensely grateful to you and anxious to use all his influence to do anything to improve and facilitate relations between the two Governments.

I explained the need of the fullest information and the frankest exchange of views.

WILLIAM WISEMAN

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 10, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

. . . I talked the financial situation out with McAdoo when he was here Tuesday. I think it can be satisfactorily adjusted. Northcliffe comes for to-morrow and Sunday, and I will be able to see how nearly the English position coincides with McAdoo's. . . .<sup>1</sup>

I cautioned McAdoo to give, when he had to give, with a glad hand, for in any other way we will lose both money and good will. As long as we have money to lend, those wishing to borrow will be agreeable, but when the bottom of the barrel is reached, it may be a different story. It is their turn now to

<sup>1</sup> 'I am spending the next four days with Colonel House, through whom I have been able to effect much more good than I have achieved at Washington.' Northcliffe to Bonar Law, August 10, 1917.

be pleasant — later it will be ours in order to collect what they owe.

I remember, during one of the old-time panics, a very rich man was asked by a friend of mine whether he was terribly worried. He replied, 'No, I am not at all worried, but the banks that are carrying me are.' . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Colonel House's desire that the financial advances of the United States should be generous ought not to be taken to mean that he was merely interested in helping the Allies. He did not fail to impress upon them the absolute necessity of falling in with Mr. McAdoo's plan for an interallied council and the coördination of demands, if adequate American assistance was to be expected. The details of the plan might have to be altered to meet the objections of London and Paris, but the principle was essential to American financial help.

*Lord Northcliffe to Mr. Lloyd George*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, August 15, 1917

House quite realises the force of our objections to the proposed powers of the interallied conference, but he urged that an endorsement of this kind was essential for McAdoo's political position. McAdoo has many enemies and is about to go to Congress for permission to issue another immense loan. He must be fortified by expert military opinion from Europe that these vast loans are necessary to victory. I argued the matter at considerable length.

Eventually Colonel House, who rarely raises his voice, said with much emphasis: 'McAdoo will insist upon the interallied council.' . . . Things were going smoothly and there were remarkably few strikes or conscription riots. But there

was an ugly spirit in Congress and McAdoo must be able to prove that no money is being wrongfully used. . . . In view of the popular underestimation of Great Britain's efforts, said Colonel House, it was most difficult for McAdoo to explain the immense appropriations for Great Britain.

NORTHCLIFFE

*Lord Northcliffe to Sir William Wiseman*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, August 16, 1917

The monthly money question seems easier, but we shall have an anxious winter in regard to finance. McAdoo is being accused in some newspapers of spending the nation's money like a drunken sailor. He was five hours with House last week. House was very emphatic about the interallied conference. . . . It is absolutely necessary to McAdoo to have this expert endorsement of the money that is allocated to the Allies, he added.

NORTHCLIFFE

A few weeks later he reëmphasized, in a cable to the Prime Minister, the close relation between the difficulties of this problem and public opinion: 'House, who always sees three months ahead,' he wrote, 'obviously foresaw the present agitation in the mind of the public here as to the immense sums required by the Allies, and especially by England. The current newspapers are giving much space to the subject of the loans to the Allies, particularly to England.'

The difficulties of the financial problem were appreciated quite as keenly by the French Commissioner. Tardieu later wrote of them:

'Without means of payment in dollars . . . the Allies would have been beaten before the end of 1917. America's entry into the war saved them. Before the American soldier, the

American dollar turned the tide. . . . For Europe, what a stream of gold! But its approaches were crowded. Banker of her Allies since 1914, England came first. France, who had suffered more than England, wanted to be served equally well. The others pressed behind, a clamouring crowd whose enormous estimates frightened the Treasury officials. . . . Associated, but not Allied, the United States had authorized its Secretary of the Treasury to grant advances to Europe, but not to enter into definite undertakings. There were to be no bilateral negotiations, no general agreements, no mutual stipulations. The United States in financial matters was to play the part of distributor and arbitrator. That was to be its financial policy.

‘This independent policy was justified and strengthened by the unbridled competition of the borrowers, by their ever-outstretched hands, by the astuteness of their ever-increasing demands. American mistrust increased when . . . both London and Paris, on the ground of their financial autonomy, stubbornly opposed the American proposal for an interallied finance board. . . . Every day my Government called upon me to obtain regular agreements, which it considered indispensable. Every day the Treasury told me, as it told my colleagues, that it did not intend to enter into any binding agreements. The American Congress had limited the object, the amount, the form of financial assistance. No one could complain that this assistance was not forthcoming. But no one had the right to count upon it.’<sup>1</sup>

## V

To mitigate the consequences of the delay in the formation of an interallied economic council, Lord Northcliffe urged the appointment of a British official of high political station, as commissioner qualified to settle with the American Government the funds that might be advanced at regular intervals.

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 227–29.



Early in the summer he had discussed possibilities with Colonel House and reached the conclusion that Viscount Reading, Lord Chief Justice, would be the ideal choice. Lord Reading was a close friend of Mr. Lloyd George and a financial expert who had created the happiest impression in Washington during the autumn of 1915. He was highly placed in the political sense and would speak with full authority.<sup>1</sup> 'Before asking for Reading,' wrote House, 'it was agreed that I should see McAdoo and discuss it with him.'

The Secretary of the Treasury, like Mr. Wilson, had already urged that a financial commissioner be sent to Washington, and he warmly approved the suggestion of Lord Reading. The only question was whether the British Government would appreciate the need of appointing so high an official, who might be spared from London only with difficulty. Lord Northcliffe delegated Wiseman, then in London, to impress upon the War Cabinet the critical nature of the situation in the United States.

'There is a very urgent need,' Wiseman reported of American conditions, 'for an official of the highest standing to proceed to Washington and discuss with Mr. McAdoo financial problems. He should be a man who can not only grasp the strictly financial problems, but who will also understand the political situation in America and can discuss with the Secretary of the Treasury the political problems involved in the raising of immense loans in the States. The mistake in the past has been to send purely financial experts who have had but little knowledge of, or patience with, the serious political difficulties which face the Administration in Washington.'

<sup>1</sup> So far back as February, 1916, House had thought of Lord Reading as an ideal British envoy. See *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, II, 196.

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 12, 1917

I have now seen most people of importance including the King, Premier, Chancellor of the Exchequer. . . . The British Government understands, though it is reluctant to admit, the most powerful position of the United States. The British Government trusts the President and will give him all information willingly, but certainly did not understand the necessity of keeping him frankly informed of their weakness as well as strength. . . .

WILLIAM WISEMAN

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 20, 1917

I believe I have succeeded in making the Cabinet appreciate the vital importance of the United States in the present situation, and the necessity for very frank and cordial coöperation between the Governments; but owing to enormous pressure of urgent affairs on the Government it takes considerable time to get action taken. . . .

WILLIAM WISEMAN

The British may have appreciated the need of close co-operation with the United States, but they continued to hesitate before deciding to send another representative. Perhaps they feared lest their organization in America might become still further complicated. Northcliffe exercised all his persuasive powers and sent frequent cables to the different members of the War Cabinet, insisting that the situation demanded the appointment of a financial commissioner with broad political powers. 'I am semi-officially informed that delay about Lord Reading is causing irritation. . . . House insists that a politician should come.'

*Lord Northcliffe to Colonel House*

[Telegram]

WASHINGTON, August 24, 1917

The Government has once more asked me if it is essential that Reading should come. Can I have your yes or no through Miller.

NORTHCLIFFE

*Colonel House to Lord Northcliffe*

[Telegram]

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS

August 24, 1917

Yes, I think it is essential to have Lord Reading or some one like him.

EDWARD HOUSE

*Sir William Wiseman to Lord Northcliffe*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 24, 1917

Have done my best to persuade Government to send Reading and this morning Chancellor informed me that he will ask him to undertake mission. I do not know Reading personally but dare say his sound impartial judgment will help on general questions, besides finance, and on his return will be able to give sound advice to the Cabinet. Suggest you cable Reading urging him to accept and to discuss matter with me. I believe his appointment will be another step to better co-operation and making Washington real war headquarters. Cabinet actually thought Wilson might be persuaded to come here.

WISEMAN

*Lord Robert Cecil to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 25, 1917

Balfour is on a holiday and I am acting for him. It is proposed to ask Lord Reading to go to Washington in connection with financial situation. I gather you approve of this suggestion and in itself it seems excellent from here, but I am afraid lest it should complicate still further our representation in United States, unless in fact it was part of some general rearrangement.

It is at this point that I should greatly value your advice. A complete understanding between our two countries is of such vital importance to both of them and even to the whole world that I am venturing to hope you may feel able to tell me quite candidly and fully what you think. . . .

What powers should Lord Reading have, and how should they be made to fit in with the position of the Ambassador and of Northcliffe if he remained?

I know I have no right to ask you for this service, but I also know that whether you feel able to advise me or not you will forgive me in view of the vast importance of the interest at stake. I realize that you were able to express your views very fully in these matters to Mr. Balfour, Drummond, and Wiseman, but circumstances have so much changed that I have ventured to ask you for a fresh expression of them.

CECIL

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 25, 1917

We have reached a crisis in our immediate relations with the United States. . . . Your opinion will be treated in strictest confidence by the War Cabinet. May I not urge upon you the great service you will do for the cause by cabling your



views, whatever they may be, quite fully and frankly to Cecil. . . .

WILLIAM WISEMAN

*Colonel House to Lord Robert Cecil*

[Cablegram]

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 26, 1917

. . . In my opinion the best temporary solution would be to send Lord Reading or some one like him, who has both a financial and political outlook, and give him entire authority over financial questions, Northcliffe to retain charge of all commercial affairs. When Northcliffe feels that he can return, Grey might be sent here, and if he cannot accept could you not come yourself? What is really needed is some one who can dominate and compose the situation and who would have the entire confidence of the President. . . . Sir William Wiseman understands the situation and can give further details.

The opinion given is wholly mine and without consultation with any one.

EDWARD HOUSE

This remarkable interchange of cablegrams illustrates, as nothing else could, the kind of service performed by House in behalf of President Wilson and the Allies. Sir William Wiseman has commented upon it as follows:

‘It is difficult for the chronicler to define, and for the reader to appreciate the position and influence of Colonel House during the World War. Every now and then, a phrase in a cable or letter, or the tone of a despatch, throws striking proof — a spot-light on a darkened stage. Of such is the cable from Lord Robert Cecil. As Acting-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs he speaks directly in the name of the

British Government when he cables to Colonel House asking in effect whether Reading should be sent to Washington, whether Northcliffe should remain, and how their duties should be defined and made to fit in with those of the Ambassador. A truly remarkable tribute to both the wisdom and discretion of Colonel House, that a foreign Government should seek his advice upon so important and delicate a problem. But only those who know the ways of Chancelleries can fully appreciate what it meant for the British Foreign Office, with its great tradition, even to discuss so intimate a problem with an unofficial statesman of another country. It must be added that the Foreign Office in this instance, as in many others, accepted Colonel House's advice and acted upon it.'

The request that he undertake the mission, which was immediately laid before Lord Reading by the British Government, was supported by a long cable of August 26 from Northcliffe to him, urging the necessity of accepting it. Northcliffe again emphasized: '(1) that the Americans have no conception of our sacrifices in men, ships and money: (2) that they are as yet unaccustomed to the huge figures of war finance. . . . I am most anxious that we should get a firm contract with the United States Government for the regular allocation, for the duration of the war, of the monies we require.' Without any delay Lord Reading agreed to come.

*Lord Reading to Lord Northcliffe*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 31, 1917

Much impressed with your telegram. Have arranged to leave next week. I am getting information here and will discuss with you on arrival. Have seen Wiseman, who will accompany me on voyage.

READING

## VI

At almost the same moment that the British Government decided to send over Lord Reading with wide authority with which to meet the problems of finance and supply, an arrangement was made at Washington by which the purchasing necessities of the Allies were to be cared for by a commission, created to take over the functions formerly exercised for the British Government by J. P. Morgan and Company. The official announcement, issued by Secretary McAdoo on August 24, was as follows:

‘Formal agreements were signed to-day by the Secretary of the Treasury, with the approval of the President, on behalf of the United States, and by the representatives of Great Britain, France, and Russia for the creation of a commission with headquarters at Washington, through which all purchases made by those Governments in the United States shall proceed. It is expected that similar agreements will be signed with representatives of other allied Governments within the next few days.

‘The agreements name Bernard M. Baruch, Robert S. Lovett, and Robert S. Brookings as the Commission. These gentlemen are also members of the recently created War Industries Board of the Council of National Defense, and will thereby be able thoroughly to coördinate the purchases of the United States Government with the purchases of the Allied Powers.

‘It is believed that these arrangements will result in a more effective use of the combined resources of the United States and foreign Governments in the prosecution of the war.’

Northcliffe cabled to London on August 24, commenting upon the satisfaction of the American Administration, which had evidently chafed under the delays in arranging the purchasing agreement: ‘Government greatly pleased, and as a





LORD READING





result expressed intention of helping us in every way possible.' And on the following day to the Chancellor of the Exchequer: 'It will probably surprise you to know that the pens with which the agreement was signed are to be engraved and kept.'

This commission, of course, did not in any way meet the request of Mr. McAdoo for an interallied council for the correlation of Allied demands, but it went far towards organizing effective machinery for the payment for supplies purchased by the Allies in this country.<sup>1</sup> It obtained offers at the best current prices, submitted them to the accredited representatives of the Allies, and finally oversaw and directed the purchases made, the Allied representatives themselves determining technical details, such as contracts and inspection.

The purchasing agreement of August was an essential improvement in mechanism, which greatly facilitated all buying operations on the part of the Allies and led to unquestionable economies. It did not touch the major problems of interallied finance and supply which, as the summer closed, still remained unsettled. But the process of adjustment was at least in course of development.

The arrival of the Reading Mission early in September proved to be a step of the first significance in the general co-ordination of Allied problems. House was clearly delighted. 'There is no one,' he wrote, 'so well equipped for the work in hand. A great jurist, he possesses a knowledge of finance which is at the moment essential if order is to be brought out of the present chaos. He has a fine diplomatic touch which will ensure against unnecessary friction. The jangled nerves of many high-strung individuals will be soothed by this imperturbable negotiator. He has also the confidence of the British Prime Minister as perhaps no other man has,

<sup>1</sup> 'We cannot replace Stettinius, who is a genius . . .' Northcliffe to Mr. Balfour, August 29, 1917.

and that in itself is a compelling reason for his appointment on such a mission.'

The Reading Mission paved the way for the creation of the interallied finance council so insistently demanded by Mr. McAdoo. It led equally to the decision to send an American War Mission to Europe, the object of which was to secure not merely a working organization in economic and military affairs, but also agreement upon a unified programme of war aims.

## CHAPTER V

### WAR AIMS AND PROPAGANDA

My thought is to give the German liberals every possible encouragement.  
*Colonel House's Diary, May 19, 1917*

#### I

No less a statesman than Bismarck averred that the most important elements in politics, upon which the fate of empires might turn, were the 'imponderables.' This was supremely true of the World War, in which moral forces combined with economic to break down the spirit of the peoples of the Central Empires behind the fighting fronts. They are easy to trace although difficult to evaluate; historians will always differ as to the relative influence of military, economic, and moral factors upon the final result. But it is certain that while the final surrender was the direct result of defeat in the field of battle and the ravaging effects of the Allied blockade, it was hastened by the spirit of revolt against the old imperial system.

Sir William Wiseman drafted the following memorandum on Wilson's war policy, after the lapse of a decade.

#### *Wiseman Memorandum on Wilsonian War Policy*

*February 1, 1928*

'It might appear to the reader of the *Intimate Papers* that President Wilson and Colonel House devoted most of their time to propaganda, and not to the active conduct of the war. This is not true. It is natural that the *Intimate Papers* should dwell more on those questions which are of continuing interest rather than the problems of war supplies and organization, which were technical and not of any particular interest now, excepting as showing the gigantic efforts that were made.



‘It was undoubtedly true that from the first outbreak of the Great War both President Wilson and Colonel House were more interested in the causes and purposes of the war and means to prevent another such catastrophe, rather than in the actual military operations. This was also true after the United States entered the war, and yet both men realized the need for strenuous and immediate effort on the part of their country, and devoted themselves to the uncongenial task of making war with all the energy of mind and body that they possessed. Wilson (who always said that he had a “one-track” mind) felt that he could not allow his thoughts to dwell on the fascinating problem of the League of Nations while he was responsible for the American war effort, and he deliberately excluded it from his mind and devoted himself to what he described as “knocking the Kaiser off his perch,” making, as he always did, a very deliberate distinction between war on Prussian militarism and the German people themselves, with whom he felt he had no quarrel. It was during this time that he asked Colonel House, who he thought could properly devote some of his time to these questions, to study particularly the Covenant for the League, and also to develop propaganda destined to show the true war aims of the United States and associated powers, and particularly to encourage the liberal elements in all countries to realize that it was a war of liberation; also to seek means of getting this thought to the German people.

‘One of the greatest services Wilson rendered to the Allied cause was his appeal to the liberal-minded people of all countries, who naturally recoiled from the horror of war. Wilson made them feel it was a necessary, although terrible, undertaking; and there is no doubt that there would have been more trouble among the so-called pacifists had it not been for the Wilson influence. The vital effect of his speeches and propaganda in Germany have been fully recognized by

German writers, and culminated in the German request for an armistice based on the "Fourteen Points."

From the moment in which the United States entered the war, President Wilson adopted the principle of undying hostility to the imperial régime and of friendship to the German people. 'We have no quarrel,' he said in his speech of April 2, 1917, 'with the German people. We have no feeling towards them but one of sympathy and friendship.' He hammered constantly upon the note that the war was one of liberation for Germany, and that the German people might have peace so soon as they renounced their 'imperial masters.' German leaders declared that his efforts to separate German people from German Government were as useless as 'biting on granite.' In the United States and in Entente countries there was bitter criticism of his attempt to exculpate the German people. Historians of the future will doubtless question the truth of his thesis that the German people had been dragged unwillingly by their chiefs into a course which they abhorred. Wilson's political justification lies in the fact that in the end, their resolution worn away, the Germans abjured their old political system and surrendered upon the basis of his demands.

The policy of driving a wedge between Government and people was nothing new. The Allies of 1814, in their invasion of France, began with a proclamation of unending war upon Napoleon and peace to the French people. During the World War the Germans themselves constantly attempted to stimulate Socialist feeling in the Entente countries against the Governments; Steed of the *Times* and others who understood conditions in the Central Empires insisted that the shortest way to winning the war was through effective encouragement of the disaffected subject nationalities of the Hapsburg Empire. The possibility of appealing to the German Social Democrats against Prussian imperialism had been suggested

both in Great Britain and France. At the time of the *Lusitania* sinking, House wrote to the President proposing that in case of war with Germany Wilson might, in his speeches, 'exonerate the great body of German citizenship, stating that we were fighting for their deliverance as well as the deliverance of Europe.'<sup>1</sup>

This attitude Wilson maintained consistently throughout the war, and in the end it produced results. It was no pose upon his part. For German accomplishments and culture in the past he had high admiration; for the creed and the methods of those whom he called the 'military masters of Germany' he had nothing but hatred. Colonel House was evidently of the same feeling. 'If you could hear the stories these Americans bring back from the occupied portions of France and Belgium,' he wrote the President on April 20, 'you would feel that any sacrifice that America might make was well worth while in order to crush German militarism.' Both Wilson and House wished to fight militarism with brains as well as with cannon, and persisted in the belief that it was foolish to assume that the German people were naturally and inevitably bound to the chariot wheels of their existing masters or that they served them from preference. 'The German common people seem sick at heart,' House added in his note to Wilson, 'and would be glad to rid themselves of the pest.'

His comment may or may not have been true, but there was much logic in his argument that the Allies had lost an opportunity by refusing to emphasize a distinction between people and rulers in their fulminations against Germany; furthermore certain of the speeches of Allied statesmen had seemed to threaten the destruction of the German nation and had thus fortified rather than weakened German loyalty to their rulers. The policy of making allies of the German

<sup>1</sup> House to Wilson, June 3, 1915. *Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, II, 466.



people themselves, which Wilson had expounded in his speech of April 2, must be continually reëmphasized, although there was perhaps good cause for the emotional repugnance of the Allies to any extension of the hand to the German people.

‘May 29, 1917: Carl Ackerman was my most interesting caller. I am arranging with him to get his articles, entitled “The Peace Snag,” widely syndicated in this country, South America, and Europe. It seems necessary for the world to know what the German military clique have in mind, and how impossible peace is at the moment.’

*Colonel House to Lord Bryce*

NEW YORK, June 10, 1917

DEAR LORD BRYCE:

... It is clear that the German military clique, which brought about the present world tragedy, are now bent upon the amalgamation of Central Europe from Bruges to the Bosphorus. If they are able to accomplish this purpose, the German people will sustain them, for the war will seem worth while. If they fail, it is probable that the Government will offer the people a liberal monarchy in order to save the present dynasty.

Our advices are that the liberal movement in Germany is strong and is constantly receiving new recruits of influence. They complain, however, of the little help they receive from the outside. Every reactionary utterance made by those in authority in England and France is quoted in Germany and used to prove the Government's contention that the Allies' purpose is to crush Germany both politically and economically.

On the other hand, the German Government is making a pretense of wanting a just peace — a fact which has no foundation whatever. The President is trying to get the



truth into Germany in order to wage war against the Prussian autocracy from within as well as from without. I hope you also will lend your great influence in the same direction. . . .

Your very sincere

E. M. HOUSE

During the course of the spring it had become clear that some sort of a restatement of war aims by the Entente was desirable and perhaps necessary, if revolutionary Russia were to be kept in the alliance. The Provisional Government formed in March, which still supported Allied war aims as expressed in the secret treaties, had been re-formed and the Social Democrat, Kerensky, brought into control. He hated Germany and was loyal to the old alliance, but both by conviction and by pressure from anti-war groups in Russia, he was compelled to disavow all imperialist war purposes. The new policy was summed up in the phrase, imported from German Socialism, 'Peace without annexations or indemnities, on the basis of the rights of nations to decide their own destiny.' The response of the Entente Powers, as expressed in the speeches of their leading statesmen as well as in official notes sent to Petrograd, seemed evasive and did not satisfy the Russians. It was easier for President Wilson, whose hands were tied by no promises of territorial annexations, to meet the new Russian attitude. He thus found an opportunity to express sympathy with the radical Petrograd Government and at the same time to throw out a line to the German liberals. On May 26 he addressed a note to the Russian Government as follows:

'Wrongs must first be righted, and then adequate safeguards must be created to prevent their being committed again. . . . But they must follow a principle, and that principle is plain. No people must be forced under sovereignty

under which it does not wish to live. No territory must change hands except for the purpose of securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty. No indemnities must be insisted on except those that constitute payment for manifest wrongs done. No readjustments of power must be made except such as will tend to secure the future peace of the world and the future welfare and happiness of its peoples.'

In the mean time President Wilson, whose time and attention were naturally taken up with all the problems connected with placing the country upon a war footing, commissioned House to make a special study of the German situation and advise him as to the proper moment for a public statement of American policy and what lines it should follow. House was sent copies of all telegrams coming from Copenhagen and Berne, the two chief sources of information on Germany and Austria.

Symptoms of discontent were evident in the Central Powers. Austria was war-weary and had already started secret peace conversations; the Hapsburg Monarchy faced the expressed discontent of her subject peoples, which threatened to become translated from debates in the recently convoked Reichsrath into open revolt. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Czernin, was anxiously searching out possible paths to peace and talked of liberal reforms. In Germany he found an ally in the restless intriguer, Erzberger, a clever albeit unstable figure, who promised that the Reichstag would fly the banner of democracy and peace in a revolt against the militarists and imperial bureaucrats. At no time were the latter in serious danger of losing control. Nevertheless it seemed to Colonel House, who was kept well informed of the liberal ferment in Germany and of the increasing demand for peace, that the movement might well be fostered by help from outside.

'May 19, 1917: The cables coming for me through the State Department from our Minister at Copenhagen, which are parts of the diary, show that a large element in Germany is now working for democracy. If it is true, as these despatches indicate, that Bernstorff is leading this movement, I have great hopes for its success, for Bernstorff is much cleverer than either the Chancellor or Zimmermann, who seem to be standing in the way. Bernstorff has been away from Germany long enough to catch the drift of world opinion, and he sees that eventually democracy must come to even autocratic Germany, and he evidently desires to become its sponsor and the recipient of its favors.

'My thought is to give the German liberals every possible encouragement so they can tell the German people that "here is your immediate chance for peace because the offer comes from your enemies, who will treat with you at any time you are in condition to express your thoughts through a representative government. On the other hand, the present government is offering you peace through conquest, which of necessity has in it all the elements of chance and cannot be relied upon."'

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 30, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

It is, I think, evident that the German military clique have no intention of making peace upon any other basis than that of conquest. . . .

The Kaiser and his civil government are taking the gambler's chance. If they are able to hold what they have, then the German liberals can be defied, for the mass of the German people will be satisfied with the outcome of the war.

If, on the other hand, military reverses come, the Kaiser and his ministers will lean towards the liberals and give Germany a government responsive to the people. In the mean



time, they will give no terms because they hope to hold what they have seized, and if their intentions were known, there would be near revolution in Germany because a majority of the people want peace even if it should be without conquest.

The pacifists in this country, in England and in Russia, are demanding a statement of terms by the Allies which shall declare against indemnities or territorial encroachments. They believe, and are being told, that Germany is willing for peace on these terms.

It seems to me important that the truth be brought out, so that every one, both in and out of Germany, may know what the issue is. I hope you will think it advisable to take some early occasion to do this. Unless you lead and direct the liberal Allied thought, it will not be done.

Such utterances as those recently made by X and Y [British and French statesmen] play directly into the hands of the German imperialists. There seems to be no intelligent or coördinate direction of Allied policy. Imperial Germany should be broken down within as well as from without. The German liberals justly complain that they not only have had no help but that their cause is constantly hurt by the statesmen and press of the Allied countries.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Wilson responded enthusiastically, averring that House's letter 'chimed exactly' with his own thoughts. 'I wish you would follow it up,' he wrote, 'with advice on these points': When should he give the address? How could he express the point of view of the American Government without seeming to contradict the British and French statesmen who made no distinction between German people and Government? He added that he would like to say: in substance just what you say in your letter. . . . You are in closer touch with what is being said than we are here and could form a much safer



and surer judgment than I could on how the necessary things ought to be said.<sup>1</sup>

To this Colonel House replied, having his various talks with Drummond and Balfour in mind, that there would be no difficulty with the British. As to the date of delivery, he urged that it be at once.

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 5, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

... June 14th — Flag Day — I think would do if you will arrange for wide publicity. I would get the world on tiptoe beforehand, and then arrange to have what you say cabled in ungarbled form to the ends of the earth. You have come to be the spokesman for Democracy, as indeed the Kaiser is the spokesman for Autocracy. However, I would caution against mentioning him. He is nearly as unimportant as the Tsar was before he was dethroned — both merely representative of systems.

It will vastly accelerate liberalism in Germany to ignore the Kaiser, and let the German people work out their own details.

I would advise care in phraseology so that neither France nor Italy may see their respective hopes for Alsace and Lorraine and the Trentino endangered. England will not be offended. She is interested in having German hopes for a Middle Europe under Prussian control forever shattered. I have talked this out with Balfour.

A kindly word for Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey would help the purpose in mind.

The two points that I would bring out are, (1) to make clear Imperial Prussia's purpose of conquest, (2) and the unwillingness of the democracies to treat with a military

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, June 1, 1917.

autocracy. I would emphasize the thought of a world at arms not against the German people but against a Prussian oligarchy.

If you would send me in advance a copy of the address, I think I would know if there was a word or line which might offend sensitive friends. If you also think well I can ask Sir William Wiseman to come here, so that he may take a word of explanation to the Ambassadors of England, France, and Italy.

For your information only, let me say that Balfour has given Wiseman his confidence to an unusual degree, and they have arranged a private code that can only be unraveled by Drummond and themselves. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Colonel House did not see the President's speech before its delivery, which was given as planned, on Flag Day. Wilson wrote to him that he had been much delayed in getting at the composition of it and did not have a chance to let him see it beforehand: I do not think, he added, that it contains anything to which our Associates in the war (so I will call them) could object.<sup>1</sup> The sentence is important as containing an early, perhaps the first, use by Wilson of the phrase which described America's status, that of an 'Associated Power'; also because it indicates the President's appreciation of the delicacy of the problem of war aims in view of the aspirations of the Entente.

Both at home and in the Entente countries tremendous enthusiasm was evoked by the Flag Day speech. In it the President held closely to the two ideas which had been agreed upon in the Drummond memorandum: that we were fighting the existing German Government and not the German people; that peace was impossible so long as that

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, June 15, 1917.

Government remained in power. Wilson gave the speech, as he wrote to House, 'in a downpour of rain to a patient audience standing in the wet under dripping umbrellas.'

'We know now as clearly as we knew before we were ourselves engaged,' said the President, 'that we are not the enemies of the German people and that they are not our enemies. They did not originate or desire this hideous war or wish that we should be drawn into it; and we are vaguely conscious that we are fighting their cause, as they will some day see it, as well as our own. They are themselves in the grip of the same sinister power that has now at last stretched its ugly talons out and drawn blood from us.'

The speech concluded with the warning that a stable peace with the military group which controlled Germany and, for the moment, southeastern Europe, was out of the question. Peace offers from such a source could not be taken seriously. There followed the implication that with the overthrow of this group, the opportunity for peace might appear:

'The military masters under whom Germany is bleeding see very clearly to what point Fate has brought them. If they fall back or are forced back an inch, their power both abroad and at home will fall to pieces like a house of cards. It is their power at home they are thinking about now more than their power abroad. It is that power which is trembling under their very feet; and deep fear has entered their hearts. They have but one chance to perpetuate their military power or even their controlling political influence. If they can secure peace now with the immense advantages still in their hands which they have up to this point apparently gained, they will have justified themselves before the German people; they will have gained by force what they

promised to gain by it: an immense expansion of German power, an immense enlargement of German industrial and commercial opportunities. Their prestige will be secure, and with their prestige their political power. If they fail, their people will thrust them aside; a government accountable to the people themselves will be set up in Germany as it has been in England, in the United States, in France, and in all the great countries of the modern time except Germany. . . . If they succeed, America will fall within the menace. We and all the rest of the world must remain armed, as they will remain, and must make ready for the next step in their aggression; if they fail, the world may unite for peace and Germany may be of the union.'

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 14, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I can hardly express the pleasure your speech of to-day has given me. It has stirred me more than anything you have ever done. For two years or more I have wanted some one high up in the Allied Governments to arraign Germany as she deserved. You have done it and done it so well that she will be centuries freeing herself from the indictment you have made. . . .

Your devoted

E. M. HOUSE

'June 14, 1917: The President made his great Flag Day speech to-day. My letter to him tells what I think of it. As a matter of fact, it only partially tells the story, for I think he has done one of those necessary things which as yet had not been done well. . . . They have attempted it, but neither Lloyd George, Grey, Asquith, Briand, Poincaré, nor Viviani have done more than scratch the surface. The Presi-



dent has done it properly, and what he has said will leave a scar that will stay for generations.

‘A man in the President’s position has the world for an audience, and if he says something worth while and says it well, it will live forever.’

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 15, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I hope you are seeing the reception your Flag Day speech has been given. The . . . *Transcript* had the enclosed [eulogistic] editorial last night. The Boston *Herald* . . . says editorially: ‘Every American ought to read it and in doing so rejoice that we have at the head of the Republic in such a crisis as this a man of preëminent capacity for clear and convincing statement of public policies.’

While, of course, you will not want to make another speech of this kind soon, yet when it is necessary, what do you think of challenging Germany to state her peace terms in the open as the other nations have? She should be driven into a corner and made to express her willingness to accept such a peace as the United States, Russia and even England have indicated a willingness to accept, or put herself in the position of continuing the war for the purpose of conquest.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

During the succeeding weeks, at the suggestion of the President, House worked on plans that might lead the German Government to state its war aims and destroy the fable that it was ready for a moderate peace. This seemed to the President at the moment more important than a re-statement of Allied war aims, such as the Russians and Entente pacifists asked for,

'June 28, 1917: I have another budget of foreign mail. Buckler writes concerning conditions in England, and encloses a letter to the President signed by Norman Angell, Philip Snowden, Ramsay MacDonald, E. D. Morel, Charles H. Buxton, Charles Trevelyan, and several others. I received a copy of this letter some time ago, but did not send it to the President. I shall send the original, although I do not altogether agree with the purpose of the letter, which is to ask the President to demand of the Allies a restatement of their peace terms, and to have them made to harmonize with the President's January 22nd speech and the Russian statement of terms.

'In my opinion, what is needed now is to force Germany to give her terms.'

House also exchanged many letters with Americans of German ancestry and of quite different types, for the purpose of securing knowledge of political conditions in Germany and discussing methods of impressing upon the German liberals the tremendous reserve strength of the United States and the impossibility of a peace of reconciliation so long as Germany refused to democratize her Government.<sup>1</sup> 'I gave X,' wrote House on July 23, 'the thought that I have already given to other German-Americans, as to the folly of Germany trying to make peace under her present form of government. I told X that if I were Germany's best friend I would advise against it.' Bernard H. Ridder brought to House plans to help the liberal movement in Germany through pressure from the German-Americans, and suggestions as to how best America's war preparations might be given publicity in Germany. 'The recent letter of

<sup>1</sup> Paul Warburg to House, May 14, 1917, July 15, 1917, August 4, 1917. Bernard H. Ridder to House, April 25, 1917, April 27, 1917, August 7, 1917, August 31, 1917. For an example of the loyal spirit displayed by Americans of German ancestry, see Otto Kahn, *Right above Race*.

the President,' wrote Ridder, 'emphasizing his confidence in Americans of German ancestry, fell upon grateful ears.'

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 9, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

... The letter from Bernard Ridder is interesting. I believe he is right when he says, 'There is no adequate realization in Germany to-day of the enormous preparations being made in our country.'

I believe, furthermore, that where the Allies have fallen down is in their lack of publicity work in neutral countries and in the Central Powers.

Northcliffe sent me a letter yesterday from Stanley Washburn,<sup>1</sup> in which Washburn said that Germany was spending millions in Russia in this way and the Allies were doing practically nothing to offset it.

Bertron<sup>2</sup> writes that 'the only way to hold Russia and utilize her enormous latent power effectively is through very thorough and extensive publicity. This we have been strongly urging upon Washington but, up to the time of our departure, nothing definite has been done. The reverses that the Russians have had might have been avoided had we been able to get to work immediately on our arrival in Petrograd with sufficient educational literature to reach the army and people.' ...

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Lord Northcliffe, busied as he was with the problems of coördinating supplies, none the less found time to take the

<sup>1</sup> War correspondent, attached for twenty-six months to the Russian army, military aide and assistant secretary to the Root Mission to Russia.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Bertron, prominent New York banker, who was a member of the American Mission to Russia under the leadership of Elihu Root.

most active interest in these plans of propaganda and discussed them at length with House. He had already conceived the ideas which were carried into effect in the following spring, of distributing by airplane, in and behind the German lines, great packages of leaflets bearing the double message of war on the German imperialists, peace to the German liberals.<sup>1</sup>

*Lord Northcliffe to Mr. Lloyd George*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, August 15, 1917

I do not know how far House speaks for the President in this matter of propaganda, but in the course of our interviews he referred to it again and again. He said the war was being fought without imagination; that where the Germans have spent millions on propaganda we have only spent thousands, and that ours was poor matter at that. He repeated that it is essential to spread in Germany through neutral newspapers, by aeroplanes, and by the numerous German visitors to be found in Switzerland, Denmark, Holland, Sweden, and Norway, news of the immense expenditures and preparations being made by the United States. . . .

House pointed out that the Allies had been altogether outwitted in propaganda [in Russia] and everywhere else. If a small portion of the money which had been expended in war material had been put into effective propaganda in Russia, in neutral countries and in South America, where we had allowed the Germans to spread their lies unchecked, the war would have nearly reached its conclusion.

NORTHCLIFFE

In the course of a discussion with Lord Northcliffe, Colonel House put forward the suggestion of a rather daring

<sup>1</sup> Sir Campbell Stuart, *Secrets of Crewe House*, chapter iv.



experiment in war publicity, nothing less than an open debate on war aims between the *New York World* and a German newspaper of standing. Obviously there was little chance of the German Government permitting any German paper to accept a challenge. Such a refusal, House argued, would in itself help to condemn the German cause and weaken the loyalty of the German liberals. If it should be accepted, the German Government might be forced to a clear statement of war aims.

*Colonel House to Mr. Frank I. Cobb*<sup>1</sup>

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
July 15, 1917

DEAR MR. COBB:

Some weeks ago I asked Sir William Wiseman to suggest to you a challenge from the *World* to the *Berliner Tageblatt* to present in each paper the respective views of the Allies and the Central Powers. That is, the *World* to offer an editorial column twice a week in which the German side of the controversy might be presented to the American people, provided the *Tageblatt* would give the same space in which the American side might be presented for the enlightenment of the German people.

The two papers would at once become a world forum, in which all belligerents and neutrals could form some judgment (1) as to what the quarrel was about and (2) who was in the wrong.

Northcliffe, who is here and to whom I mentioned what I had in mind, thinks it conceivable that such a discussion might lead to peace. He promises to aid in every way we think he can.

If the plan appeals to you, I hope you will come up and talk it out with me, for there are many sides to it, and no move should be made until it has been thought through.

<sup>1</sup> Editor of the *New York World*.

The German Government would probably decline to permit such a discussion, but the refusal would hurt their cause and help that of the Allies. Before making any move the President should approve, and his potential aid be invoked. . . .

Sincerely yours

E. M. HOUSE

*Mr. Frank I. Cobb to Colonel House*

NEW YORK, July 18, 1917

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

The *World* will be glad to take that matter up and carry it through, if possible. I cannot get away at present to see you, but perhaps we can arrive at some kind of a general understanding by letter. Of course, the thing cannot succeed unless we have the full coöperation of both the United States and German Governments.

I am not sure, in my own mind, how the matter could best be presented to the *Tageblatt* — whether by direct communication or through the good offices of the Swiss Minister. What is your own opinion about that? We could prepare a formal proposal to the *Tageblatt* and ask the State Department to have it transmitted by cable or otherwise. If the German Government acquiesced, or even permitted the *Tageblatt* to receive the communication, the details could then be worked out.

Such a debate would really amount to a preliminary discussion of peace in its ultimate effect and I do not think its value could well be overestimated, if it could be done. There would be little use in undertaking it, however, unless there were assurances from Germany that our side of the case would not be censored, although we might properly have a private agreement as to the limits of the debate.

Will you be good enough to let me know your own views as to the method of carrying it through? I agree with you

thoroughly that nothing must be done unless we have the plans completely mapped out and agreed upon.

With sincere regards,

As ever yours

FRANK I. COBB

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS

July 19, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I am enclosing you a copy of another letter from Cobb and my reply.

I have but little hope that the German Government will permit such a discussion, but if they do not, their refusal can be used in such a way as to make serious trouble for them within Germany itself.

Quick action, of course, is important and I would appreciate your writing or wiring me your decision.

I will give the matter my personal attention and arrange that nothing is published from our side without the most careful consideration. If any question should arise about which there is doubt, it will be submitted to you.

It seems to me we have an idea that may startle the world and, conceivably, be of great value. There is an ever-increasing distrust by the plain people of secret diplomacy, and such a move as this under your sanction would have great influence for good.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

P.S. I suggest Northcliffe because of the influence of his publications in England, and Tardieu because he is one of the most brilliant writers on international subjects in the world. . . .

The plan of a public debate, with the tacit approval and support of the respective Governments, was startling in its novelty. This was popular diplomacy with a vengeance! President Wilson found it difficult to consider; he wrote to House on July 21: Frankly, I see some very grave possibilities of danger. Even admitting that the technical difficulties involved in asking an enemy state to permit a free discussion by a newspaper could be passed, the President did not see how it would be possible to keep the hand of the Administration concealed. The debate would amount to the inauguration of peace parleys, and the Entente Powers were by no means in accord with the United States as to the principles of the settlement: Our real peace terms, said Wilson, those upon which we shall undoubtedly insist, are not now acceptable to either France or Italy (leaving Great Britain for the moment out of consideration).

The President asked House to write him again: You may have entirely satisfactory replies to make to my objections; but I cannot think of them myself. He looked upon it, he added, as a 'deeply important matter.'<sup>1</sup>

*Colonel House to Mr. Frank I. Cobb*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
July 24, 1917

DEAR MR. COBB:

I am glad to know that you are trying to work out a general plan embracing your theories in the proposed debate and that you will send it to me in a few days.

The President and I are discussing it. He realizes the great importance of it; in fact, he is so deeply impressed with its importance that he is afraid of it. He thinks it might lead us into the discussion of peace terms that would be exceedingly dangerous and cause dissension among the Allies.

I realize this too, but I still think that the danger can be avoided.

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, July 21, 1917.



The President also cannot quite see how you can get the challenge to the *Tageblatt* without it being apparent that this Government is sanctioning it and, in a way, responsible for the debate.

I am taking it up with the State Department and they have promised to try and think a way out. I feel that we have something of enormous value if it can be properly used, and we must find a way.

Sincerely yours

E. M. HOUSE

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 9, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I am enclosing copies of Cobb's challenge to the *Tageblatt*.<sup>1</sup> Surely, there could be no objection to putting it in this mild form. Will you not advise me what answer to make?

If this is once started, we could easily get into Germany the knowledge of our preparations, as Ridder suggests. We could also give the Germans as a whole a sense of security which they do not now feel. The whole military propaganda in the Central Powers is directed at the fear of dismemberment and economic rule. If the German people could be brought to realize that their integrity would be better safeguarded by such a peace as we have in mind than it would be by the continued reliance upon great armaments, the militarists' arguments would break down.

If we want to win this war it seems to me essential that we must do something different from what the Allies have done in the past three years.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter.

Despite the attractions of the House-Cobb project, the obvious difficulties involved in it seemed too great to those in authority and the proposed challenge was never sent. President Wilson found himself unconvinced at the end, as at the beginning, that the indefinite dangers to which it might lead were not greater than the possible advantages. He emphasized especially the danger of precipitating open discussions on war aims between the United States and the Allies at the moment when complete unity of purpose was all-important; since this was precisely the point that House had stressed at the time of the Balfour Mission, he could find no adequate answer to the President's objections. Wilson was acutely conscious of the difference between the war aims of the United States and those of the Allies: We cannot force them [the Allies] now, he had written to House, and any attempt to speak for them or to our common mind would bring in disagreements which would inevitably come to the surface in public.<sup>1</sup> Some other means must be found of compelling Germany to state her war aims.

Thus the proposal for an open debate was quietly dropped into the limbo of untried experiments. House's disappointment would doubtless have been more keen, were it not that at this very moment a new opportunity for inspiring a discussion of war aims was given to President Wilson by the Pope's proposal of peace negotiations.

#### APPENDIX

*Mr. Frank I. Cobb to Colonel House*

NEW YORK, August 8, 1917

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

I have made a rough draft of the challenge for *The Tageblatt* and a request to the State Department. It seemed to me better that the State Department request be made perfunctory and formal without assuming that the Government was concerned in any way with the matter, but had merely been asked to transmit it, as it is asked to transmit a thousand

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, July 21, 1917.

other things. That might be much more discreet than trying to arrange an alibi.

Please make any changes whatever that you deem wise in the draft of both these communications.

Sincerely yours

FRANK I. COBB

[Enclosure:]

NEW YORK, August 8, 1917

Editor, *The Tageblatt*,  
Berlin.

It is no less important, in the stress of war than in the controversies of peace, that there should be a common agreement as to the issues involved, whatever differences there may be as to the relation of these issues to the aims and objects of government. No such agreement exists as between the German people and the American people. They are at war, but Americans are unable to understand why the German Government adopted a line of policy which forced the United States into the war; nor do the German people understand why the American people should have considered these German policies *casus belli*.

Believing that a frank discussion of the issues is one of the great duties that journalism owes to the general welfare, *The World* hereby challenges *The Tageblatt* to a full and free debate on the questions that have divided the United States and Germany, each newspaper to print the case presented by the other, as well as its own case, under arrangements to be agreed upon later in respect to detail. It seems to *The World* that such a debate might have a permanent value in the way of clarifying the issues and crystallizing public sentiment in the two countries.

Trusting that it will seem expedient for *The Tageblatt* to accept this challenge in the spirit in which it is offered.

Most respectfully

*The New York World*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE POPE'S PEACE PROPOSAL

We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure. . . .

*President Wilson's reply to the Pope, August 29, 1917*

#### I

DURING the early summer the movement for a peace of compromise had gone far in Austria and in certain German circles; it was stimulated by the Russian suggestion of a peace without annexations or indemnities. The German military leaders were hostile to any consideration of peace. 'Ludendorff,' wrote Czernin, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary, 'is exactly like the statesmen of France and England; none of them wishes to compromise, they only look for victory.' In Austria, however, the need of an early peace had been realized by Czernin for some months. 'I am nevertheless quite convinced,' he wrote on April 2, 'that another winter campaign would be absolutely out of the question; in other words, that in the late summer or in the autumn an end must be put to the war at all costs.'<sup>1</sup>

The Austrian Emperor had already started secret negotiations with the Entente through Prince Sixte of Bourbon, brother of the Empress and an officer in the Belgian army. But they lagged and finally fell through, partly because the Italians would hear of no concessions sufficient to attract Austria towards a separate peace, partly because Czernin intended to use the negotiations as a means to a general peace including Germany, and the Allies were determined not to compromise with an undefeated Germany. Nor would the German military group consider peace without an increase of territory; Ludendorff made it plain that he regarded

<sup>1</sup> Czernin, *In the World War*, 22, 164.



the war as lost if Germany did not emerge from it with enhanced power.

‘The future will show,’ wrote Czernin, ‘what superhuman efforts we have made to induce Germany to give way. That all proved fruitless was not the fault of the German people, nor was it, in my opinion, the fault of the German Emperor, but that of the leaders of the German military party, which had attained such enormous power in the country. Every one in Wilhelmstrasse, from Bethmann to Kühlmann, wanted peace; but they could not get it simply because the military party got rid of every one who ventured to act otherwise than as they wished.’<sup>1</sup>

Members of the German Reichstag began to doubt the possibility of complete victory. Matthias Erzberger, a leader of the Center Party who was in touch with Czernin and aware of the latter’s memorandum upon the necessity of peace, was able to form something of a *bloc*, opposed to the control of the military group and advocating a peace of compromise. On July 19, under his management, a majority of the Reichstag voted a resolution declaring that ‘the Reichstag strives for a peace of understanding and the permanent reconciliation of the peoples. With such a peace forced acquisitions of territory and political, economic, or financial oppressions are inconsistent.’ The resolution was carried by 212 votes to 126.

This revolt against military influence proved abortive, despite the hopes it aroused abroad. The parliamentary crisis made necessary the resignation of the Chancellor, Bethmann, who had lost the confidence of all groups; but his successor, Michaelis, a capable administrator without parliamentary experience, refused to accept the control of the Reichstag and so far as a peace of compromise was concerned

<sup>1</sup> Czernin, *op. cit.*, 362.

became almost as determined as Ludendorff, if less unequivocal. The parliamentary revolution proved a fiasco and the Reichstag resolution 'a mere pious opinion.'<sup>1</sup> The position of those in Germany who advocated a compromise peace was weakened thereby, as it was by the refusal of the Entente to consider the Reichstag overtures in a conciliatory mood.

It was obvious, nevertheless, that a strong current was running towards peace in Germany, although it did not carry with it the governing power in the Empire. Doubtless in the hope of strengthening it and perhaps at the inspiration of Erzberger or Czernin, or both, the Pope issued upon August 1 a note addressed to all the belligerents, suggesting a settlement of the war based upon the principles of complete restoration of occupied territory, disarmament, and international arbitration.

In Europe the Allies seemed to be somewhat fearful lest the President should answer the Pope's offer in such a way as to commit the United States to negotiations for which the Allies were unprepared, or so as to weaken the war spirit in Allied countries. They were embarrassed by the lack of close coördination with the United States, especially in view of the fact that Wilson was coming to be regarded in the popular mind as spokesman for their cause as against that of Germany.

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 11, 1917

Mr. Balfour has just received through the British representative at the Vatican an appeal from the Pope in favor of peace addressed to the belligerent governments. The full text of the appeal has not yet been received, but from the cabled summary it is clear that it will raise many questions

<sup>1</sup> Buchan, *A History of the Great War*, iv, 14.

of difficulty. What answer, if any [should be made], will have to be very carefully considered, and Mr. Balfour hopes that the President will be inclined to let him know privately what his views on the subject are.

WILLIAM WISEMAN

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 13, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

. . . Enclosed are some cables from Sir William. Balfour is evidently very much concerned regarding the Pope's appeal and I hope you will feel that you can give him your private opinion as he requests. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Colonel House himself was unquestionably convinced that a categoric refusal to consider the Pope's peace proposal would have unfortunate effects. It would discourage the German liberals, who would be again told that the Entente were planning nothing less than the political annihilation of Germany. It would hasten the collapse of war-weary Russia. House was anxious that the President should use this opportunity to insist publicly that it was not the Entente that stood in the way of peace, but rather the imperialistic designs of Germany as represented by Ludendorff.

Thus on grounds of policy he desired a conciliatory reply. Emotionally he wanted to have a hearing given to any peace proposal whatever, on the chance of shortening the war and relieving humanity of its present sufferings. He was appalled by the horror of war. Who could guarantee that, by continuing the butchery until the maximum war aims of the Allies were secured, the final settlement would be sufficiently improved to justify the loss of life?

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 15, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I am wondering how you will think it best to answer the Pope's peace proposal.

It seems to me that the situation is full of danger as well as hope. France may succumb this winter. Russia is so eager to get at her internal problems that she will soon, almost certainly, insist upon peace on a basis of the *status quo ante*.

It is more important, I think, that Russia should weld herself into a virile republic than it is that Germany should be beaten to her knees. If internal disorder reach a point in Russia where Germany can intervene, it is conceivable that in the future she may be able to dominate Russia both politically and economically. Then the clock of progress would indeed be set back.

With Russia firmly established in democracy, German autocracy would be compelled to yield to a representative government within a very few years.

On a basis of the *status quo ante*, the Entente could aid Austria in emancipating herself from Prussia. Turkey could be sustained as an independent nation under the condition that Constantinople and the Straits have some sort of internationalization. This would settle the question of a division of Asia Minor between England, Russia, France, and Italy — a division which is pregnant with future trouble. Turkey would be inclined towards the Entente to-day if it were not that she prefers being a German province rather than to be dismembered as proposed by the Allies. . . .

This leads me to hope that you will answer the Pope's proposal in some such way as to leave the door open and to throw the onus on Prussia. This, I think, can be done if you will say that the peace terms of America are well known, but that it is useless to discuss the question until those of the



Prussian militarists are also known, and further that it is hardly fair to ask the people of the Allied countries to discuss terms with a military autocracy — an autocracy that does not represent the opinion of the people for whom they speak. If the people of the Central Powers had a voice in the settlement it is probable an overwhelming majority would be found willing to make a peace acceptable to the other peoples of the world — a peace founded upon international amity and justice.

I believe an occasion has presented itself for you to make a notable utterance and one which may conceivably lead to great results.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

The President was more belligerent than House, less inclined to any sort of compromise; he intimated that he might not take any notice at all of the Pope's offer. He went on to indicate his objections to even a tentative acceptance of the papal proposal, which he asked House to forward to England for Balfour's information.<sup>1</sup>

*Colonel House to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS

August 18, 1917

In reply to your request, the President bids me say:

'I do not know that I shall make any reply at all to the Pope's proposals, but I am glad to let Mr. Balfour know what it would be were I to make one — as it is possible I may be led by circumstances to do.

'Appreciation should, of course, be expressed of the hu-

<sup>1</sup> Comment by Sir William Wiseman on the following cable: 'Emphasis should be laid on the fact that Wilson answered Balfour through House regarding so important a matter as the Pope's peace offer.'

mane purpose of the Pope and a general sympathy with his desire to see the end of this terrible war come on terms honorable to all concerned; but these objections should be stated:

‘(1) That no intimation is conveyed that the terms suggested meet the views of any of the belligerents and that to discuss them would be a blind adventure;

‘(2) That such terms constitute no settlement, but only a return to the *status quo ante* and would leave affairs in the same attitude that furnished a pretext for the war; and

‘(3) That the absolute disregard alike of all formal obligations of treaty and all accepted principles of international law which the autocratic régime still dominant in Germany has shown in the whole action of this war has made it impossible for other governments to accept its assurances on anything, least of all on the terms upon which peace will be maintained. The present German Imperial Government is morally bankrupt; no one will accept or credit its pledges; and the world will be upon quicksand in regard to all international covenants which include Germany until it can believe that it is dealing with a responsible government.’

Personally, I feel that the door should not be shut abruptly. It will give the Prussian militarists the advantage of again consolidating sentiment in Germany.

EDWARD HOUSE

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 22, 1917

I am in fullest sympathy with the President's line of thought as expressed in your telegram received August 20th.

I have telegraphed our British Minister at the Vatican saying we have had no opportunity of consulting with the Allies and therefore are not in a position to say what answer if any should be sent to the Pope. But that in our opinion it

was time for the Central Powers to make a statement of their policy. This had already been done by the Entente Powers. Next move should be made by enemy. United States Ambassador here is telegraphing full text. I hope this step will meet with the President's approval.

First thought of the Russian Government is that a reasonable reply on behalf of all the Allies should be sent. First thought of the French Government is that no answer is at present necessary. For my part, I greatly dread idea of any joint endeavor of composing elaborate document dealing with complex problems necessarily looked at from somewhat different angles by each belligerent. Drafting difficulties alone seem to render task impossible.

A. J. B.

## II

### *Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 17, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I am so impressed with the importance of the situation that I am troubling you again. . . .

I believe you have an opportunity to take the peace negotiations out of the hands of the Pope and hold them in your own. Governmental Germany realizes that no one excepting you is in a position to enforce peace terms. The Allies must succumb to your judgment and Germany is not much better off. Badly as the Allied cause is going, Germany is in a worse condition. It is a race now of endurance, with Germany as likely to go under first as any of the Entente Powers.

Germany and Austria are a seething mass of discontent. The Russian Revolution has shown the people their power and it has put the fear of God into the hearts of the Imperialists.

A statement from you regarding the aims of this country would bring about almost revolution in Germany in the

event the existing Government dared to oppose them. The mistake has been made over and over again in the Allied countries in doing and saying the things that best helped the militarists. The German people are told and believe that the Allies desire not only to dismember them, but to make it economically impossible to live after the war. They are therefore welded together with their backs to the wall.

A statement from you setting forth the real issues would have an enormous effect and would probably bring about such an upheaval in Germany as we desire. While the submarine campaign gives them hope, it is a deferred hope, and the Government, not less than the people, are fearful what may happen in the interim. What is needed, it seems to me, is a firm tone, full of determination, but yet breathing a spirit of liberalism and justice that will make the people of the Central Powers feel safe in your hands. You could say again that our people had entered this fight with fixed purpose and high courage and would continue to fight until a new order of liberty and justice for all people was brought about and some agreement reached by which such another war could never again occur.

You can make a statement that will not only be the undoing of autocratic Germany, but one that will strengthen the hands of the Russian liberals in their purpose to mould their country into a mighty republic.

I pray that you may not lose this great opportunity.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
*August 19, 1917*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

The Russian Ambassador is with me to-day. He is very much disturbed over the Pope's peace overture and how you will reply to it.



He believes that success or failure in Russia may depend upon your answer. He takes the same view as I do except that he feels more keenly on account of its effect upon not only Russia but the present government there. He believes if it is treated lightly and not in a spirit of liberalism it will immediately split Russia and will probably cause the downfall of the present ministry.

I asked him why he had not conveyed this view to you. His reply was that he hesitated to impose himself upon you unless you sent for him. . . .

His Government think the Allies have made a mistake in refusing passports to the Stockholm Conference.<sup>1</sup> If, in addition to doing this, they brush aside the Pope's overtures, he considers it inevitable that there will be a schism, not only in Russia, but probably in other countries as well.

He would like you to take the lead and let Russia follow. He hopes you may be willing to say that the United States will treat with the German people at any time they are in a position to name their own representatives. He thinks that is the crux of the situation.

At first, he thought it well to speak of the Kaiser. I explained why this was not advisable and he agreed. He then suggested the military caste as the offenders, and again I cautioned against this. The German people here for more than a century [have] been taught to believe that their greatest duty to the Fatherland was to offer their services in a military way and they cannot understand just what we mean by 'militarism' as applied to Germany and not to France, Russia, and other countries. They can and do understand

<sup>1</sup> In April the *Internationale* issued invitations for a Socialist Conference at Stockholm, which the Russian revolutionary leaders insisted should be used to clarify war aims. A committee under the presidency of the Swedish Socialist, Branting, received the deputies who arrived from the enemy states; the British and French Governments refused to give passports to Sweden to those desiring to attend the Conference, which Germany was believed to favor as a means of fostering the pacifist spirit among the Allied peoples.

what we mean by representative government and they are eager for it.

I have pointed out to such Germans as I have met that the worst thing that could happen to Germany would be a peace along the lines of the *status quo ante* with the present form of government in control.<sup>1</sup> All the hate and bitterness that the war has engendered would cling to them and it would express itself in trade warfare and in all kinds of social and economic directions. With a representative government, they could return to the brotherhood of nations, declaring that the fault had not been theirs. In this way, they would make a certain reparation which would come near leading to forgiveness.

I believe you are facing one of the great crises that the world has known, but I feel confident that you will meet it with that fine spirit of courage and democracy which has become synonymous with your name.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Colonel House was by no means unaware of the opposing opinion which held that the Pope's offer, inspired by the Germans and Austrians, indicated their failing strength and was designed merely to save them from the just consequences of a war which they had started and made the most brutal in history. Ambassador Jusserand wrote very definitely that any peace based upon pre-war boundaries would mean the defeat of everything for which the Allies had been fighting. He shared with President Wilson a suspicion of the promises of the existing rulers of Germany.

<sup>1</sup> President Wilson later expressed this same thought in his message to Congress, December 4, 1917: 'The worst that can happen to the detriment of the German people is this, that if they should still, after the war is over, continue to be obliged to live under ambitious and intriguing masters interested to disturb the peace of the world, . . . it might be impossible to admit them to the partnership of nations which must henceforth guarantee the world's peace.'

*Ambassador Jusserand to Colonel House*<sup>1</sup>

WASHINGTON, August 23, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL,

I usually rejoice at the thought that Magnolia is a cool, pleasant Northern place where you make provisions of health for the good of your country and the satisfaction of your friends. When important events happen, my feeling is not quite the same; I regret that pretty place is so far, and the chain tying me here so strong.

I should have liked so much to have with you a few moments' talk concerning the Pope's note.

To my mind, it is the German note of December last, in a new garb. The garb is more ornamented, but what is under is the same. The aim is to establish a sort of *status quo ante*, and in reality not even as much; so that the criminals (who have just set fire to the cathedral at St.-Quentin, in order to show that the leopard has not changed its spots) be not punished, and that their fate be not what it must *needs* be, if the world is to become 'a safe place for democracy': an example and a warning. All the questions which might trouble the Germans would be postponed till another day, till doomsday may be. As for the *status quo*, think of Belgium and France recovering their ravaged, destroyed, blood-soaked unfortunate cities and territories, just as they are, while the Germans would go home, to there enjoy, until the next time, the 'glory' of their deeds, and the vast plunder taken by them against all laws.

The Austro-Germanic inspiration is shown in many ways. The fact that Serbia is not even mentioned is characteristic; also the insistence for the freedom of the seas, and the statement that 'on both sides the honor of arms is safe.' May our arms never be shamed by the kind of 'honor' the German troops reaped at Louvain, Reims, and elsewhere!

<sup>1</sup> This letter, M. Jusserand writes in 1928, 'is not, of course, permeated with the Locarno spirit; but those were pre-Locarno days.'

And the whole fabric, based on the pledged word of all! when we know, and you know (the submarine pledges made to you) what the German word is worth and how it vanishes when 'necessity,' i.e., interest, is at stake.

I do not know what are the views of the President. Many in Europe think that the note is so obviously one more enemy move, that it might be left with no other answer than the 'accusé de réception' already sent by the English. Or, if one is made, it should be very general, referring to the answer sent to the President concerning peace. We cannot have different answers for the President and for the Pope; we have not changed our minds; and on the principles, at least, embodied in this answer, the President himself has shown, by his subsequent addresses to Congress, that he agreed.

What is, on these grave problems, your own opinion? I should be pleased and proud to think that it somewhat agreed with mine.

With best wishes for your health, I beg you to believe me, my dear Colonel,

Very sincerely yours

JUSSERAND

*Colonel House to Ambassador Jusserand*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 26, 1917

DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR:

. . . I, too, regret that I am heat-bound and that I have not been able to be in Washington during the summer. However, my exile is almost over and I hope to see you soon.

I believe you are right in thinking that the Pope's peace overture was inspired by Austria. I am not so certain that the Germans had a hand in it. . . .

Your very sincere

E. M. HOUSE



## III

President Wilson finally decided to reply in formal fashion to the Pope and to base his reply, like his Flag Day speech, upon the doctrine of peace to the German people and war on the German Government. He centered his note, as he wrote to Colonel House, on the point that it was impossible to accept the word of the existing rulers of Germany. This in itself might serve to weaken German confidence in their leaders. He continued with the assurance that the Allies did not desire the political or economic annihilation of Germany and hinted strongly that reconciliation with a liberalized Germany might be possible. He disavowed explicitly the threats made in certain Allied quarters of an economic war against Germany after the peace, and specifically guaranteed his opposition to 'punitive damages, the dismemberment of empires, the establishment of selfish and exclusive economic leagues.' The essence of the reply, then, was a refusal to consider a peace of reconciliation concluded with the present rulers of Germany; but an invitation to the German liberals to coöperate in a new and better world organization:

'We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure [unless explicitly supported by such conclusive evidence of the will and purpose of the German people themselves as the other peoples of the world would be justified in accepting. Without such guarantees] <sup>1</sup> treaties of settlement, agreements for disarmament, covenants to set up arbitration in the place of force, territorial adjustments, reconstitutions of small nations, if made with the German Government, no man, no nation, could now depend on.

'We must await some new evidence of the purposes of the great peoples of the Central Powers.'<sup>2</sup> God grant it may be

<sup>1</sup> The words enclosed in brackets were not in the draft sent to House.

<sup>2</sup> In the original draft President Wilson had written 'Empires.'

given soon and in a way to restore the confidence of all peoples everywhere in the faith of nations and the possibility of a covenanted peace.'

President Wilson sent on to House for his criticism the first draft of the note. 'Please tell me exactly what you think of it,' he wrote. And later: I shall await your comments with the deepest interest, because the many useful suggestions you have made were in my mind all the while I wrote. . . . I think of you every day with the deepest affection.<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of a half-dozen slight verbal alterations and two short interpolations, the draft note sent for House's inspection was the same as that finally published.

'August 23, 1917: This has been one of the busiest and most important days of the summer,' wrote House. 'The President sent his reply to the Pope's peace proposal. . . . I did not receive it until twelve o'clock and, although I had John J. Spurgeon, Colcord, and Bullitt, of the *Public Ledger*, with me, I succeeded in reading, digesting, and answering it in time to mail on the Federal Express. While Murray<sup>2</sup> did not know its contents, he seemed to sense its importance, for he said that, unless the superintendent would guarantee its safe delivery by to-morrow morning, he would himself take it to Washington. He is to place the letter in a special pouch, and it is to be taken at once to the White House upon its arrival in Washington. Murray would have been even more impressed had he known that he had in his possession what at the moment was the most interesting document in the world.'

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, August 22, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Former Congressman and then Postmaster of Boston, who was spending the day with House.

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 24, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

You have again written a declaration of human liberty. . . . I am sure it is the wise, the statesmanlike, and the right way to answer the Pope's peace overtures. England and France will not like some of it, notably where on page three you say that 'no peace can rest upon political or economic restrictions meant to benefit some nations and cripple others, upon vindictive action of any sort, or any kind of revenge or deliberate injury.'

And again on page four where you say: 'Punitive damages, the dismemberment of empires, the establishment of selfish and economic leagues, we deem childish, etc.' But you have the right of it, and are fully justified in laying down the fundamentals of a new and greater international morality.

America will not and ought not to fight for the maintenance of the old, narrow, and selfish order of things. You are blazing a new path, and the world must follow, or be lost again in the meshes of unrighteous intrigue.

I am cabling Balfour expressing my personal hope that England, France, and Italy will accept your answer as also theirs.

I am, with an abiding affection,

Your devoted

E. M. HOUSE

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 25, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

May I suggest that you substitute some other word for 'childish' in the sentence beginning 'Punitive damages, dismemberment of empires, etc.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the final draft the President substituted the word 'inexpedient' in place of 'childish.'

This sentence may cause dissension and to apply the term 'childish' to the group advocating these things would add fuel to the fire. Of course, what you say is true, but sometimes the truth hurts more than anything else.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

'September 5, 1917: The Attorney General stopped off on his way to Maine,' wrote House, 'and spent the day. . . . I asked him when the Cabinet knew about the President's reply to the Pope. He said not until the afternoon of the 28th, at the Cabinet meeting. . . . Gregory said there was no dissension concerning it. . . . The first proof of the message had in it the word "childish," but after receiving my second letter on the subject, the President evidently called in the first issue and eliminated that word. Gordon tells me that the British Ambassador told him that Jusserand was happy at the change.'

The President's note to the Pope, which was published on August 29, evoked general commendation. I am delighted, wrote Mr. Wilson to House, that you thought the reply what it should be and that it has, on the whole, been so well received.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Alderman, of the University of Virginia, later wrote to House that of all Wilson's messages it touched the 'high-water mark of his papers in its breadth and dignity and beauty.' The day of its appearance Lord Grey said of Wilson's messages, 'one after the other they go to the real root of the matter and fill me with satisfaction.' Lord Robert Cecil cabled to House in the same vein: 'We greatly admire the note and it has been received with much satisfaction by our Press.'

The Americans of German ancestry noted the opportunity given by Wilson's reply for influencing liberal opinion

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, September 2, 1917.



in Germany. On September 19 House recorded: 'Bernard Ridder called this morning to talk over his plans to get the German-Americans back of the President's answer to the Pope.'

*Mr. Karl von Weigand to Colonel House*

WASHINGTON, August 29, 1917

DEAR COLONEL:

It is to my mind the greatest step that has yet been taken towards peace. Its effect will be splendid in Germany. The psychological tactics will avail the President more in attaining the end he has aimed at than many corps on the front. It gives the German liberals every assurance they have wanted. It confirms everything that Harden has been writing about Mr. Wilson. It is a wonderful document.

Sincerely yours

KARL VON WEIGAND

Colonel House had kept in close touch with the British while the reply to the Pope was under consideration, and put forward the suggestion that the Allies would agree to accept the President's note as their own answer to the Pope. This would in itself go far towards a coördination of war aims and perhaps indicate a tendency towards revision of the more extreme territorial aspirations of the Allies. I hope with all my heart, wrote President Wilson to him, that the associated governments will . . . say ditto to us.<sup>1</sup>

*Colonel House to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

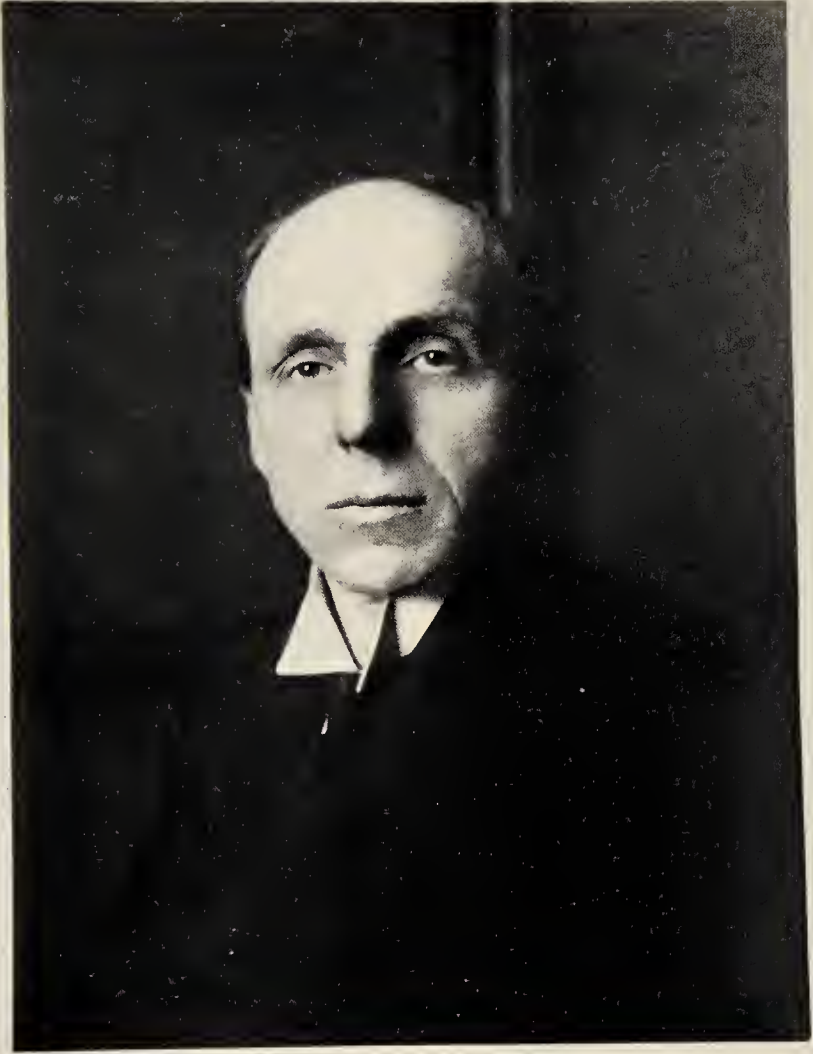
[Cablegram]

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS

August 24, 1917

The President has composed an answer to the Pope's peace overture, and will probably send it within a few days.

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, August 22, 1917.



Warrant House  
in the name of the King  
Robert Cecil  
21 August 1917.

LORD ROBERT CECIL  
(now Viscount Cecil)



It will serve, I think, to unite Russia and add to the confusion in Germany.

If the Allied Governments could accept it as their answer to the Pope, it would, in my opinion, strengthen their cause throughout the world. If the United States are to put forth their maximum effort, there must be a united people, and the President has struck the note necessary to make this possible.

E. M. HOUSE

*Lord Robert Cecil to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, August 27, 1917

I am grateful for information contained in your telegram of August 25th. My view is that it would be very desirable for British and other allied governments to accept the President's reply as their answer to the Pope. The question is however one of such importance that I shall have to consult the Cabinet and also our allies. I assume the President's reply follows the lines already sketched out but I should be very grateful if it were possible to send me a summary of it if the President sees no objection.

ROBERT CECIL

*Colonel House to the President*

[Telegram]

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
August 28, 1917

... In order to get cordial coöperation it would seem advisable to give your reply to the Governments in advance. It would be particularly desirable in case of Russia.

EDWARD HOUSE

It proved too late to give to the Allies advance copies of the reply to the Pope, since arrangements for publication



on August 29 had already been made. It is evident also that the President was conscious of such a difference between his point of view and that of the European Allies that he feared any attempt to reach an agreement: I felt morally certain, he wrote House, that they would wish changes which I could not make. . . . The differences of opinion will be less embarrassing now than they would have been if I had invited them beforehand.<sup>1</sup>

Those differences doubtless account for the disappointment of House's hope that the Allies would formally ratify the President's note and thus achieve something like a unified programme of war aims. It is likely that the French and Italians felt that such ratification would commit them too far in the direction of a revision of the aspirations that found expression in the secret treaties.

## IV

It was probably President Wilson's acute consciousness of the difference between his own war aims and those of the Allies that led him at this time to plan a definite formulation of the American peace programme. The time had not yet come when the details of that programme could be publicly announced. In his reply to the Pope, as he had written Colonel House, he was forced to a certain vagueness for the sake of sparing Allied feelings: I have not thought it wise to . . . be more specific because it might provoke dissenting voices from France and Italy if I should — if I should say, for example, that their territorial claims did not interest us.<sup>2</sup> But the time when the American peace programme would have to be clearly expressed was approaching. Mr. Wilson wanted to be prepared not merely to formulate American war aims exactly, but also to understand the objections to

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, September 2, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson to House, August 22, 1917. See above, p. 51.

them which might be raised by our associates and to study means to bring our associates over to his ideals.

I am beginning to think, he wrote House on September 2, that we ought to go systematically to work to ascertain as fully and precisely as possible just what the several parties to this war on our side will be inclined to insist upon as part of the final peace arrangements. We ought, he added, to prepare our own position either for or against them and begin to gather the influences we wished to employ, or at least ascertain what influences we could use: in brief, prepare our case with a full knowledge of the position of all the litigants. Several of the Governments, he observed, had begun to gather material and get 'their pipes laid.' . . . What would you think of quietly getting about you a group of men to assist you to do this? . . . Under your guidance these assistants could collate all the definite material available and you could make up the memorandum by which we should be guided.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel House replied with enthusiasm that he would undertake the task thus defined by the President. 'I have been trying to do in a quiet and not very efficient way what you have suggested as wanting me to do systematically and thoroughly.'<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wilson thereupon discussed the main lines of the organization with the Secretary of State, with the result that it was decided to give House a free hand and permit him to work out the problem of outlining the important questions in his own way: Lansing is not only content that you should undertake the preparation of data for the peace

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, September 2, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Phillips, First Assistant Secretary of State, had written to House in May that we were not equipped with adequate information for the peace conference on the Balkan and Near Eastern situation. House had made arrangements for a special investigation by Mr. W. H. Buckler of the London Embassy, which he planned to extend to other problems. Phillips to House, May 19, June 6, August 16, 1917; Buckler to House, August 1, November 3, 1917; House to Wilson, September 21, 1917.

conference, wrote Wilson to House on September 19, but volunteers the opinion that you were the only one to do it.<sup>1</sup>

The organization thus inaugurated came to be called 'The Inquiry.' President Mezes, of the College of the City of New York, was named Director, and Mr. Walter Lippmann, then on the staff of the *New Republic*, Secretary. Headquarters were in New York, where the American Geographical Society offered its offices, library, and map-making facilities, as well as the invaluable services of its Director, Dr. Isaiah Bowman. For the most part its work was entirely separate from that of the Department of State or of the Military Intelligence Division of the General Staff; it concentrated not on current problems but rather on those that would be raised at the peace conference. Nevertheless the President at various times approached the Inquiry for data and advice on current policy, even before its collections were complete, and on at least one occasion utilized the information thus provided for the most important of his pronouncements on foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> Regarding the work of the Inquiry, Sir William Wiseman later wrote:

*Wiseman Memorandum on The Inquiry*

June 5, 1928

'From the early months of the war, allied foreign offices began to consider the terms of peace and the mechanics of the peace conference which must come some day. They were able to look back over many precedents of conferences, great and small. Several of their elder statesmen had actually taken part in important conferences. Lord Balfour, for instance, had been private secretary to his uncle, Lord Salisbury, at the conference of Berlin. The British and the French, and doubtless the other Allied Powers, appointed

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, September 19, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Chapter XI.



members of their foreign offices, ex-diplomats, and other experts, to prepare for the peace conference.

'The Americans, on the other hand, had little by way of precedent to guide them. The records of the State Department, naturally enough, did not contain much first-hand information about the European peace conferences of the past. It has therefore been sometimes assumed that the American Delegation came to Paris ill-prepared, and that Wilson had not the benefit of the research and skilled advice afforded to the other heads of missions. This is not true. Colonel House foresaw very clearly the need for preparation, and as early as the summer of 1917 suggested a plan to Wilson which at once appealed to the President's scholarly and orderly mind. Colonel House proposed that an organization be created which was called The Inquiry, under the direction of Dr. Mezes. The best available American historians and specialists with practical experience were invited to join the staff. Dr. Isaiah Bowman became executive officer and worked out the organization of the subjects to be studied. Professor J. T. Shotwell was in charge of historical geography and, after the Inquiry moved to Paris, of the library. David Hunter Miller, who was in charge of legal problems, later became known and respected by all the delegations in Paris as one of the ablest legal minds at the Conference. Walter Lippmann, the present brilliant editor of the *New York World*, was secretary. It is my impression that Lippmann furnished the abstract ideas which found their way into a good many of the memoranda of the American Delegation and ultimately into some of President Wilson's public speeches. To name but a few of the others: George Louis Beer was in charge of colonial questions; Charles H. Haskins, of problems of western Europe; Clive Day, of Balkan problems; Douglas Johnson, of boundary questions; W. L. Westermann, problems of the Turkish Empire; and Allyn A. Young, of economic questions.



'This earnest and scholarly group of men gave deep and impartial study to the tremendous and complicated problems arising from a war which shattered the remnants of the Holy Roman Empire, dissipated the dreams of Bismarck, and left the great Russian Empire chaotic and impotent.

'The members of the Inquiry conferred freely with any one — American or foreign — who could speak with authority and knowledge of any pertinent matter. Facts, opinions, prejudices, were patiently considered and carefully analyzed. The results of their work, their conclusions, their best advice, were summarized and submitted to the President by Colonel House, together with his own wise observations.

'Wilson often surprised his colleagues in Paris by his deep knowledge of the affairs of the Balkans, the bitter political struggle in Poland, or the delicate question of the Adriatic. If Wilson's theories seemed strange and impractical to the realists of Europe, at least they could find no fault with the accuracy of his facts.

'Among the many services which the American Nation rendered to the world during this crisis in its history, the work of the Inquiry is by no means the least important and the record of the Inquiry, so little known to the public, remains a fine example of a difficult task, well accomplished and most modestly.'

To the student of Wilsonian policy the chief interest of the inauguration of the Inquiry at this time is the indication it gives of the President's consciousness that the task of persuading our European associates in the war to accept his point of view would demand careful preparation and effort. He felt that the need for a revision of what some termed the imperialist aspirations of the Entente was vital, not merely to attain a final settlement of justice but to assure whole-hearted prosecution of the war against Germany. The Allies must make it plain that they were waging their battle in

behalf of permanent peace and not for the sake of territorial annexations. Only thus could the enthusiasm of liberal and labor elements be maintained. The situation in Russia demanded a new and a more explicit justification of the continuation of the war. The effect of Wilson's speeches upon German loyalty to the military group would attain its full value only when his principles were completely and formally endorsed by the Allies. Coördination of war aims between the Allies and the United States was just as important, in a certain sense, as coördination of military and economic efforts.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN AMERICAN WAR MISSION

I think it is essential to the cause of the Allies that a representative of the United States of the first rank should come over here officially as soon as possible. . . .

*Mr. Lloyd George to Colonel House, September 4, 1917*

#### I

COLONEL HOUSE, driven by the heat away from New York, spent the entire summer of 1917 at Magnolia, so that for the space of more than three months he did not see the President. I am both glad and sorry that you have got off to the Massachusetts shore, Wilson wrote him; glad for your sake, sorry for ours, who would wish to be much nearer to you.<sup>1</sup> The separation gave rise to the usual rumor of a break between the two, which appeared in the newspapers of September 6. Colonel House's only comment to curious reporters who pressed for an explanation was that the rumor was 'somewhat belated,' as it generally came 'about mid-summer along with the sea-serpent stories.'

The truth was that the President's confidence in House was never greater than during this summer and early autumn. He wrote at the end of September that he was hoping each day to get an opportunity to discuss 'the many things we must talk over, you and I. Affectionately yours.'<sup>2</sup> It was during this period that he constantly asked House for advice and criticism on his speeches dealing with foreign policy and our relations with the Allies;<sup>3</sup> he asked him to take charge of the collection of data for the peace conference, to investigate a very delicate problem involving charges of espionage, to give his opinion upon British blockade policy

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, June 1, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, September 26, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* June 1, June 15, July 21, August 16, August 22, September 22, 1917.

toward the European neutrals;<sup>1</sup> he entrusted him with confidential messages to be sent to the Allied leaders regarding interallied coördination, British policy in Palestine, and the handling of suggestions for peace emanating from Germany.<sup>2</sup> He finally selected him to head the War Mission designed to establish effective coöperation with the Allies, the first of its kind ever sent by the United States to Europe.

The President's letters, almost without exception, contained a personal phrase that more than anything else suggests the nature of the friendship between the two: All join me in warmest messages. Affectionately yours. . . . I am writing on the *Mayflower* . . . seeking a day or two of relief from the madness of Washington. A point is reached now and again where I *must* escape it for a little. Your grateful friend. . . . Do not be alarmed about my health. I need rest, and am growing daily more conscious that I do; but I am fit and all right. All join in affectionate messages. . . . It was a great pleasure to see you. In desperate Monday haste.

The first personal conference between the President and House after the summer came as the result of a surprise visit which Wilson made to the North Shore on September 9. He left the White House by the rear entrance, escaping notice until he reached New York, where he embarked upon the *Mayflower*. Not even the Cabinet knew of his trip until he had left Washington.

'September 9, 1917: Around seven o'clock the Navy Yard of Boston called me over the telephone to say they had a wireless stating that the *Mayflower* would be in Gloucester Harbor at two o'clock. Loulie and I went over to meet the boat, boarded it, met the President and Mrs. Wilson, and motored along the shore for two hours or more. We stopped

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, September 19, September 24, September 26, October 1, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, October 7, October 13, 1917.



first at our cottage and then went over to Mrs. T. Jefferson Coolidge's house to look at her prints, china, etc., which have been inherited from Thomas Jefferson.

'We dined on the *Mayflower*. Before dinner the President and I had an intimate talk of perhaps an hour and again for an hour and a half after dinner. . . . He told me of the talk he made to the naval officers when he inspected the fleet at Hampton Roads not long ago. He spoke to all of them, including ensigns, and said about this: "None of you have had any experience in modern warfare, therefore the least of you knows as much as the highest, and I would like suggestions from any officer in the Navy, no matter how humble his rank, regarding the conduct of our war at sea. These suggestions will be received by the Navy Board, and if you find they are not noticed, then send them to me direct."<sup>1</sup> . . .

'He is sending a commission to England recommended at the suggestion of Arthur Pollen and others, and he told the members before they left that he wished them to go over and find a way to break up the hornets' nest, and not try to kill individual hornets over a forty-acre lot. He said he was willing to risk the loss of half our navy if there was a commensurate gain.<sup>2</sup> We discussed the question of capital ships. . . .

'During the afternoon we were discussing Lincoln. We agreed that Washington would continue in history the

<sup>1</sup> Address of President Wilson to the officers of the Atlantic fleet, August 11, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> The text of President Wilson's speech does not agree exactly with what he says to House on this occasion: 'I am willing to sacrifice half the navy Great Britain and we together have, to crush that nest,' said Wilson to the navy officers on the Flagship *Pennsylvania*, 'because if we crush it, the war is won.' Admiral Sims comments sarcastically upon this sentence: 'This is master strategy with a vengeance! If the "crushing" had succeeded at the cost of half the fleets, that would have left the German fleet in command of the sea, and ensured the defeat of the Allies.' (*World's Work*, March, 1927.)

To House, however, the President merely suggested risking half of the American navy and not of the combined fleets.

greater man. I repeated what Sedgwick said when he lunched with me Saturday; i.e., that a Massachusetts historian had made the statement that Lincoln would never have been great by his deeds, but it was what he had written that had impressed the world and had given an insight into his mind that otherwise would never have been unfolded. The President did not agree with this. He thought Lincoln's deeds entitled him to greatness as well as what he wrote. He thought that his environment was, to a certain extent, limited and that by lack of wider education he did not have the outlook he might otherwise have had. Yet he thought his judgment would have been equal to any situation that might have confronted him.

'September 10, 1917: Once or twice during the conversation I threw the President off his line of thought by interpolations, and he found it difficult to return to his subject. He smiled plaintively, and said, "You see I am getting tired. This is the way it indicates itself."

'No man has ever had deeper or graver responsibilities, and no one has met them with more patience, courage, and wisdom.

'During lunch the President spoke of his nervousness when speaking in public. I had thought that he was entirely free from it, and yet he said if he had to walk across a crowded stage, with an audience in front of him, he always wondered whether he would drop before he reached the speakers' stand.

'While driving, he described himself as "a democrat like Jefferson, with aristocratic tastes." Intellectually, he said, he was entirely democratic, which in his opinion was unfortunate, for the reason that his mind led him where his taste rebelled.'

## II

It is rather surprising that the vitally important problem of interallied coördination was scarcely touched upon by

House and Wilson during this visit to the North Shore. It may have been that each avoided a discussion which might have proved wearying to the President on his vacation and which would at best have been academic, since Lord Reading, the new British Commissioner, was still on the high seas. Two days later Reading landed at New York, and the question of achieving better coöperative effort immediately came to the front.

On his return to New York, Colonel House was soon brought into relations with the new British envoy, as close perhaps as those he maintained with Northcliffe.

Reading handled a difficult situation with skill and tact. 'There are serious financial problems unsolved,' reported Wiseman to the British Foreign Office, 'but Reading is approaching them in the right spirit and is a very acceptable person to all the Administration. House, as usual, is very helpful, and I believe we are now tackling the situation properly. While I cannot say there is any popular enthusiasm for the war, there is a very solid determination to carry on with all the resources of the country until the German military power is crushed. The position of the President remains very strong. Feeling towards the British is improving. . . .'

On October 4, Wiseman reported that Reading 'has made the very best impression on McAdoo and all others concerned. It is universally admitted that the British Treasury is properly represented for the first time, and our other Allies have had to recognize that he has immediately become the dominant figure in finance.' Northcliffe endorsed this opinion enthusiastically.

*Northcliffe to Mr. Lloyd George*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, September 30, 1917

Reading is working indefatigably, amidst great difficulties. He was able to obtain fifty million dollars for Canadian



wheat, which really was an inroad on the basic principle that every cent of money advanced to the Allies should be spent in the United States. This achievement of Reading is in my opinion one that could not be brought about by any one not possessed of Reading's ability, charm, and tact in handling these difficult people. Reading, by his frankness in concealing nothing from them and by his sympathetic understanding that they are harassed day by day by the Allies for money and also by politicians and press, will, I am convinced, be able to achieve all that is humanly possible.

NORTHCLIFFE

Lord Reading's success, however, was necessarily limited. He tided over a critical situation and secured for the British the essential credits. But as the military organization of the United States developed, with consequent demands for supplies from every American department, the difficulty of securing supplies for the Allies became greater. The allotment of available supplies as between the Allied armies and the new American force was becoming a nice problem. 'I foresee that there may be a dangerous interval, possibly next summer,' wrote Wiseman, 'between the time when we run short of necessary supplies owing to the American programme, and the time when the United States army is ready to take a big part on the Western Front.'

Lord Reading refused to admit discouragement, but insisted that a more complete system of coördination must be found. On October 29 he left with House the copy of a memorandum which, as he cabled to England, summarized the general impressions formed 'after a long series of conversations with the Administration and others, including the President, Lansing, McAdoo, and House, and winding up with a long conference between ourselves, French representatives, and Crosby,<sup>1</sup> representing the United States Treasury,

<sup>1</sup> Oscar T. Crosby, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.



at which the latter set forth at length the details of the United States financial position. What I say about finance,' he added, 'should be read in close conjunction with my political impressions.' The summary is historically of value as giving a picture of American conditions drawn by one in close touch with them but written from a detached point of view.

*Reading Memorandum on Supplies*

October, 1917

'Criticism comes naturally from two opposed quarters. There is the type of opinion represented by Roosevelt to the effect that the Administration is very ill-organized for war (in which there is a good deal of truth) and that they are not throwing themselves into the business of preparation with sufficient energy (which is by no means so true). On the other hand, there is an undercurrent of suspicion in other quarters as to the extent of America's real interest in the war and as to the aims and methods of the European Allies, not only as regards the ultimate objects of the war, but also as to whether they are not sometimes using their American credits for other than strictly war purposes.

'These two opposed currents tend to drive the Administration in the same direction, namely, to emphasize the importance of the part America is going to play rather than that of the part the Allies are already playing, and to run the American programme to the possible detriment of the Allied programmes. This meets both lines of attack. It satisfies the forward party and it takes away from the others the charge that America is becoming a tool of the Allies. . . .

'A vast programme of military preparations, aviation, and shipbuilding has now passed Congress and during the past week Departments concerned have received their definite appropriations. This programme has been built up piece-

meal by each Department securing approval for what is conceived to be its needs, without coördination or effective control on the part of the Treasury. It has also been drawn up without regard to the effect on existing programmes of Allies or to the date at which these preparations can become effective as compared with the programmes of the Allies. Mr. Crosby did not defend this as being a wise or far-seeing course, but notified it to us as being what was rapidly becoming an accomplished fact. As a result the actual cash outgoings of the United States Treasury are already at the rate of \$600,000,000 a month, apart from advances to Allies, and are expected to reach \$1,000,000,000 monthly beginning with October. He explained that the Departments are not permitted by law to make advance payments, but in lieu of this they pay the contractors for the raw materials as soon as they are purchased and also for the value of the work put into them as it accrues week by week. These cash outgoings begin as soon as the contracts are placed and are not postponed pending delivery of the finished article. Advances to the Allies, which have been authorized at a maximum average monthly rate of \$500,000,000, have to be added to the above. The proceeds of the new war taxation on the other hand will not accrue to the Treasury until next year and the increases over normal revenue immediately available are only \$50,000,000 monthly.

‘It is, of course, much too soon to say that the impossible will not be achieved. But however this turns out, the three factors following are likely to govern the situation here for the months immediately in front of us:

‘(A) The officials of the United States Treasury are nervous and oppressed. Pending the result of the forthcoming Liberty loan and even thereafter they will hesitate to commit themselves. I believe that for the present we shall always get our money in the end, but it will probably be at the expense of constant importunity and some anxiety.

Nothing will be clear-cut, and each Ally will be struggling for itself. A time will probably come when we shall have to ask the Treasury to take risks which will appear unjustifiable from the strictly financial standpoint.

‘(B) Mr. Crosby stated plainly that the requirements of their own Departments must come first. Any shortage of funds, therefore, will fall mainly on the Allies.

‘(C) I told Mr. Crosby that what will save the United States Treasury, as it has saved ours in the past, will be the material limitations on what it is possible to buy. Goods will not in fact be forthcoming on a sufficient scale to absorb the vast credits to which the Departments and the Allies are becoming entitled. This will save the financial position. But the same trouble will crop up in another form. The Ministry of Munitions is more likely to be embarrassed by shortage of supplies from America than is the Treasury by shortage of dollars.

‘In short, considerations of politics and finance combine to enforce the view that America will put her own needs first and . . . the material resources of this Continent may not be equal to the new programme which it is sought to superimpose on the old. The growing lack of coördination between the programme of the Administration here and the programme of the Allies is probably, on every ground, the biggest question in front of us. But I have some reason to believe that the matter is engaging the attention of the Administration and I shall take any further opportunity of emphasizing to the President the risks lest hastily considered orders by United States War Departments spoil our efficiency before they themselves are ready. I invite the particular attention of the Minister of Munitions to the danger of his preparations becoming ill-balanced in so far as he depends on American supplies and urge him to lay his plans so far as possible without too great reliance on the resources of the United States.



‘I shall see our friend [Colonel House] again within next few days and shall discuss the whole question with him.’

## III

This important paper, with the ominous phrase, ‘growing lack of coördination,’ was sent to the British War Cabinet and doubtless impressed upon them a lively appreciation of the need of drastic measures to meet the danger. The United States officials must be made to see that American help would be more efficient if applied to the already existing armies of the Allies, and the Allied programme must be made sufficiently definite to permit the Americans to work toward it intelligently. So much Wiseman emphasized in a supplementary message.

‘Partly to develop a war spirit throughout the country,’ he wrote, ‘and partly in all sincerity, the Government has very naturally adopted the attitude described by the slogan “America first,” and has fomented the national tendency to exaggerate the part America is to play. This must not be interpreted as an undervaluation of the Allies, or a misconception of their part, nor does it imply the slightest hostility towards them. America’s own requirements will come first, but there is no reason to fear that the American programme will interfere with those of the Allies to the common detriment, provided we also have a clear-cut programme and can tell the Americans clearly what our needs are.’

The general council of the Allies on war purchases and finances, which Mr. McAdoo had demanded early in the summer, would have gone far toward meeting the conditions essential to effective American economic coöperation. But the formation of this council was still delayed. Pending its organization, Lord Reading suggested that the United States send to Europe a mission composed of the heads of



the more important departments or war-making agencies, to study the main problems of the European Allies at close range. Mr. Lloyd George asked him and Sir William Wiseman to present the proposal to Colonel House for discussion with President Wilson.

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

NEW YORK September 26, 1917

MY DEAR MR. HOUSE:

. . . You know that I try to look at everything as much in the interests of the United States as of my own country, because I believe that what is good for the one is good for the other. You will not mind, then, if I seem to be giving unsolicited advice to America. . .

I believe the greatest asset Germany has to-day is the 3000 miles that separates London from Washington, and the most urgent problem we have to solve is how our two Governments, set at opposite ends of the world, can effect the close coöperation which is undoubtedly necessary if the war is to be quickly and successfully ended. Would the President consider the advisability of sending plenipotentiary envoys to London and Paris, with the object of taking part in the next great Allied Council, bringing their fresh minds to bear on our problems, discussing and giving their judgment on some of the questions I have raised, and also to arrange — if that be possible — for some machinery to bridge over the distance between Washington and the theatre of war?

May I be allowed to add that our leaders have told me of their confidence in you and their respect for your judgment. It is to you, therefore, that we turn for counsel in a matter which would be very difficult to approach through the ordinary diplomatic channels.

Yours very truly

W. WISEMAN

The despatch of an American War Mission to Europe was desired by Mr. Lloyd George, not merely because of the need of better economic coördination but also for military reasons. The Prime Minister had long chafed at the strategy of the military leaders on the Western Front which, while it undermined the ultimate strength of Germany, was appalling in its immediate cost. The long-drawn-out process of the *guerre d'usure* seemed to him unnecessarily wasteful of lives and of time. Instead of throwing Allied forces directly against the strongest enemy, Germany, at the strongest part of its defenses, he wished to strike at the weaker members of the opposing alliance: 'knock down the props.'

What he had in mind was the establishment of a new inter-allied military organization which would, under unified direction, give up the battering of the Western Front and launch a coördinated attack against the weakest point of the central alliance. 'There is no doubt,' wrote Sir William Robertson, 'that had Mr. Lloyd George's wishes prevailed at this period the main British effort would have been transferred from France to Italy, just as in January, 1915, he wished to transfer it to the Balkans.'<sup>1</sup>

The British Chief of Staff and Sir Douglas Haig were steadily skeptical of the practical feasibility of such a strategic plan, since, as they maintained, it would be impossible effectively to emphasize the 'side shows' without imperiling the main battlefield in France. 'The General Staff continued to assert,' wrote Robertson, 'that the main road to victory lay straight ahead, across the Rhine, while Mr. Lloyd George insisted that that road was too hard, and that the best one lay, if not via Italy, Trieste, and Vienna, then via the Mediterranean, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. Throughout 1917 this dead-weight of disagreement had grievously hampered the management of the different campaigns in which we were engaged; increased the dif-

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, II, 251.

ficulty of securing concerted action between the Allied armies.' <sup>1</sup>

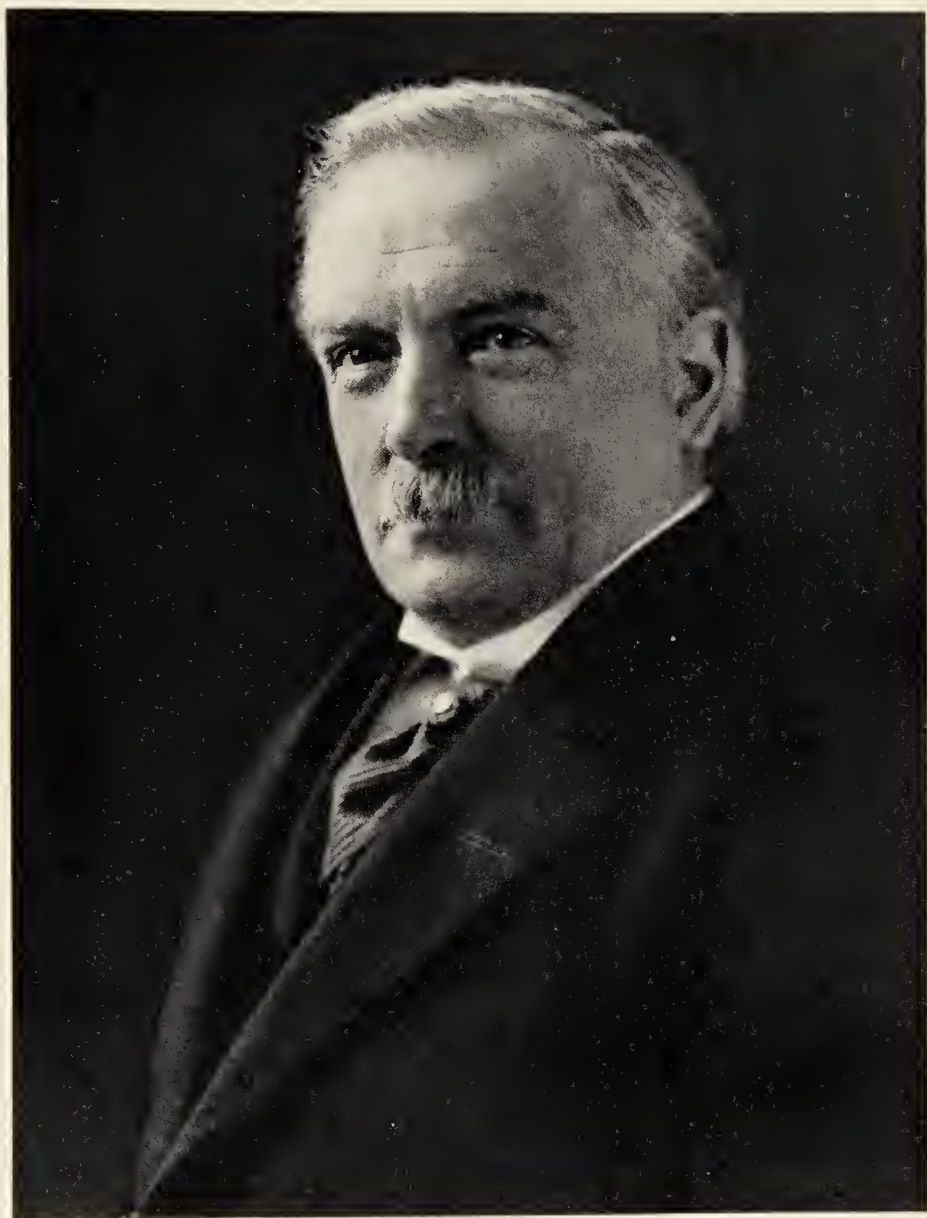
Above all Mr. Lloyd George insisted upon the necessity of unified direction of military policy in all the fields of combat, and it was to this end that he planned an interallied staff superior to the commanders-in-chief and the chiefs of staff of each individual army. In this plan he was encouraged by Sir Henry Wilson, to whom should be given much of the credit for the final achievement of allied military coördination. Sir Henry described in his diary a conversation with Mr. Lloyd George on August 23, in which he sketched the main lines of the organization which later became the Supreme War Council:

'I then disclosed my plan of three Prime Ministers and three soldiers, to be over all C.I.G.S.'s <sup>2</sup> and to draw up plans for the whole theatre from Nieuport to Baghdad. I told him [Lloyd George] that I had had this plan in mind for two and a half years, and I made it clear that it was not aimed at Robertson, or Haig, or anybody. I told him that if he was to remove Robertson, *now*, and to place me as C.I.G.S., I would still press for my plan, as being the only one which would allow us really to draw up a combined plan of operations.

'He was distinctly taken. He explained the position as follows: He was satisfied with Haig, but dissatisfied with Robertson. He was quite clear in his mind that we were not winning the war by our present plans, and that we never should on our present lines; but he did not know how, or what we should do, and he had no means of checking or altering Robertson's and Haig's plans, though he knew they were too parochial. He said that he was not in the position, nor had he the knowledge, to bring out alternative plans and

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, *op. cit.*, II, 265.

<sup>2</sup> Chiefs of Staff.



Alfred George





to insist upon their adoption, as it would always be said that he was overruling the soldiers. It was because of his profound disgust that he had thought of forming a committee of Johnnie [Lord French] and me and another, but he now quite agreed with me that that would not work and that my plan was infinitely better. . . . Altogether he rose well at my proposals.' <sup>1</sup>

If the Prime Minister were to forward those plans successfully, the support of the United States would be of importance, especially in view of the problem of man-power. Mr. Lloyd George accordingly commissioned Sir William Wiseman to explain the various elements in the situation to Colonel House. The British had been told by House that President Wilson would support any plan which promised to achieve Allied unity, and Lloyd George may have hoped to receive from an American mission support for his 'Eastern' strategy. House brought the matter to the President's attention when the latter visited New York in the *Mayflower* in mid-September.

*Mr. David Lloyd George to Colonel House*

LONDON, September 4, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE,

I have to thank you for the letter you sent me through Sir William Wiseman. I have talked things over with him with the special purpose that he should explain to you what I think about the present situation. He will go straight to see you on arrival. Very briefly I think it is essential to the cause of the Allies that a representative of the United States of the first rank should come over here officially as soon as possible to take part in the deliberations of the Allies over their future plans of campaign. Needless to say it would be a source of the utmost satisfaction to us if you were to come yourself. Sir William Wiseman will be able to tell you why

<sup>1</sup> Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, II, 10-11.

I believe that a representative of the United States could render invaluable services to the Allied cause.

Yours sincerely

D. LLOYD GEORGE

‘*September 16, 1917: To-day I lunched with the President on board the *Mayflower*,*’ wrote Colonel House. ‘We had a talk before lunch. I told him of Lloyd George’s desire that a representative from the United States be sent to the Inter-allied Conference. . . .

‘The President thought he could not go much further toward meeting Lloyd George’s wishes than to express a feeling that something different should be done in the conduct of the war than had been done, and to say that the American people would not be willing to continue an indefinite trench warfare. He thought it would be inadvisable to commit himself further. . . .’

*Colonel House to Mr. David Lloyd George*

NEW YORK, *September 24, 1917*

DEAR MR. GEORGE:

Thank you for the messages and information which came through the Lord Chief Justice and Sir William Wiseman. The President has the several matters under advisement and I hope will come to a conclusion this week.

I have sent you word through Sir William as to what I think of the plan you suggest. I favored it nearly two years ago and, unless conditions have changed so as to make it impossible, it still seems worthy of our earnest consideration.

The coming of the Lord Chief Justice has already resulted in good. Lord Northcliffe is helping to make his visit a success, and I am sure your sending him will be justified.

I have told the President that I was willing to go over in the event he thought well of the plan, although I have work of pressing importance here. I have suggested in lieu of

myself the sending of Secretaries McAdoo and Baker. In some ways, this would be better, for they could obtain so much information that would be useful in their several departments.

Sincerely yours

E. M. HOUSE

Wilson's unwillingness to express any opinion upon matters of strategy resulted from a natural feeling that the United States ought not to exert any influence in military councils until they had an army in the field. But he appreciated clearly the need of better economic coördination, and if this end could best be achieved through an American mission he was disposed to approve it.

Besides finance and supplies, the questions of shipping and of blockade had become critical. All through the summer Lord Northcliffe had insisted upon the vital importance of the tonnage problem. 'The Prime Minister feels,' he told Colonel House on August 14, 'that the speedy turning out of tonnage is to-day absolutely the first war need. The War Cabinet decided on August 9 to devote to the construction of vessels all the steel plates which can be used, in spite of the fact that this will involve a reduction in the output of shells. It was also decided to release men from the munitions works and from the army for the necessary labor.'

The tonnage question had become and was to remain for nine months, in a certain sense, the central problem of American coöperation. As Medill McCormick wrote to House, 'It is of no use to levy great armies if there is to be no shipping to transport them, and what is more important, to supply the wants of the civil populations and the armies of our Allies.'

A memorandum which the British sent House in the summer indicated that the first six months of the intensive submarine warfare had destroyed more than two and a quarter



million tons of British and a million and a half tons of Allied and neutral shipping. Taking into account the boats partially damaged and the new submarines built, which more than made up for those destroyed, it was estimated that the net loss, despite the best effort of British shipbuilders, would be over 350,000 tons a month. As the autumn passed, the Allies became more anxious. Could American shipyards make good this deficit?

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, October 11, 1917

I would be grateful if you will allow me to put before you the following facts with regard to the shipping situation, for your very careful attention:

In the first two and a half years of the war the total reduction of tonnage in the world due to the enemy's activities amounted to approximately four and a half million tons. Seven months of ruthless submarine warfare increased the above reduction by an additional four and a quarter million tons.

If to the average rate of destruction of shipping during this intensive campaign is added the decrease of tonnage caused, firstly, by the incapacitation of ships which are badly damaged without being a total loss, and secondly, by ordinary misadventures at sea, it is permissible to estimate the total reduction in the tonnage of the world during a year as in the neighbourhood of eight million tons. . . .

To offset this reduction England, who last year reduced shipbuilding to the production of about six hundred thousand tons in order to direct her energies into other channels, is now bending every effort to construct two and a half million tons next year, though it is to be feared that it will not be possible to fully reach this figure.

If the present rate of destruction is maintained Great

Britain's production of shipping added to that of the rest of the world excepting America will yet leave a minimum yearly deficit of five and a half million tons.

The situation is rendered more serious by the fact, well known to you, that, without taking into consideration future losses, available tonnage is far from sufficient to fill the civilian and military needs of the Allies.

Tonnage conditions will be the deciding factor in the extent of spring operations in every theatre of war.

England now considers it important to clearly state that she sees no possibility of carrying on her military and naval part in the war, transporting civilian and military supplies in British bottoms and continuing to furnish her Allies with as many ships as in the past.

The present great need for coal and food in Italy and France will become more serious in the spring.

British ships will also be lacking to furnish the supplies which Russia may want during the season next year when the port of Archangel is open.

At the same time, America will be confronted by the great problems presented by the transportation of her forces and the supplies for them.

In view of all the above circumstances, I suggest for your consideration the possibility of the adoption by the United States of plans for the construction of sufficient tonnage to offset the loss by submarine attack at the present rate. This would mean the construction of approximately six million tons per annum.

The effort that such a programme implies is enormous, but you will recollect that if England is unable to adopt such a programme it is because her energies are committed in those other directions into which they were turned, in common with those of her Allies, in the early days of the war under the immediate necessity of providing for increasing armies and navies and the munitions for both. Less effort

than that thus expended would have sufficed to produce more ships than submarines destroy, even when most active. It was not until 1916 that the mercantile marine became as important as armies, navies, and munitions.

America, with resources of industry and engineering superior to those of any other country, joined the war at this stage. The expenditure of strength necessary to nullify the loss of shipping, though very great, is relatively less than that made by the Allies with success to meet other emergencies. The programme outlined above means the employment of three and a half million tons of steel, which is not even ten per cent of the production of the United States, and the work of half a million men, only a minority of whom need be skilled workmen.

Even before any ships were launched, the definite adoption and vigorous prosecution of a scheme such as the one outlined would in all probability affect the enemy's hopes and, consequently, his powers of endurance in an entirely disproportionate manner. Such a programme would, of course, not provide the requisite number of bottoms by next spring, but the very fact that they were under construction would permit of freer use of those available and would be of invaluable help to tide over the critical time coming before the harvests of 1918.

Although in the last few weeks the loss of tonnage has been greatly reduced, it is not yet certain that this diminution will be sustained and it consequently would be most imprudent to take this improvement into consideration as a factor in calculations looking to the adoption of a permanent policy. I cannot, therefore, lay too great a stress on the grave possibility that the superior efforts being made by all the Allies in various other directions may be set at naught by inadequate provision for making good the loss of tonnage.

It is of paramount importance that adequate arrangements should be made for provisioning and transporting the



powerful army America is preparing, without reducing the tonnage now devoted to supplying the Allied forces already engaged, lest such reduction should weaken them in the same proportion that the American army will strengthen them.

BALFOUR

Another problem which could be settled only through achieving complete coöperation forced itself upon President Wilson. This was the question of embargo policy as it related to neutrals. Allied restrictions upon neutral trade had led to the most acute discontent and the most vigorous protests on the part of the United States, previous to our participation in the war. After entering the struggle against Germany, the American Government naturally changed its point of view and in its efforts to prevent goods from entering Germany rather improved upon the strictness of Allied measures. Relations with Holland and the Scandinavian countries became strained, and for a time it seemed possible that Sweden might be forced into the war.

On September 15 Mr. Balfour cabled House underlining the importance of establishing an Allied blockade council in London and the desirability of including American representatives who might give the authoritative views of the United States Government.<sup>1</sup> The Allies wished to define and coördinate their policy regarding embargoes upon imports to the border neutrals, and the delicacy of the questions involved made it impossible to decide them satisfactorily by telegraph.

Mr. Wilson pressed for more information, especially as to what was expected from the United States. The British replied that it was necessary first to organize machinery for the coördination of the export licensing system of all the nations at war with Germany. In the second place, it was necessary to take decisions on matters of high policy; to acquire infor-

<sup>1</sup> Balfour to House, September 15, 1917.



mation available in London as to the probable effects of a rigorous restriction of exports to neutrals; and generally to estimate the safety or danger of a policy of embargoes in connection with the prosecution of the war. There was, according to the message sent to Wilson, no British official in Washington capable of answering the searching questions that would arise under the head of general policy. The only solution of these difficulties appeared to be a direct conference in London with authorized representatives of the United States.

## IV

According to the testimony of Sir William Wiseman, Colonel House worked steadily for the despatch of an American War Mission to Europe. In a later memorandum he wrote: 'House realized the confusion that had set in owing to the conflicting demands for material and supplies. These could not properly be coördinated in Washington so far away from the scene of operations, and, on the other hand, there was no one in Europe who could speak with any authority for the United States Government. House conceived the idea of an American Mission representing all the great Departments of the Government concerned in the conduct of the war; that this Mission should sit in council with the Allies in Paris, and lay out a plan of coördination, and that representatives of the Mission should remain in Europe to see that the work was properly carried out.'

The evidence is clear that, although House urged the Mission, he did not himself wish to accompany it. His organization of the Inquiry was just beginning and his interest in the final settlement was much greater than in administrative problems connected with the war. The informal help he gave to the Allies in the United States was presumably greater than he could render on a formal mission. He had seen a cable from Drummond which stated that Balfour 'thinks

that though visit from House would be most welcome and useful, the advantage for us lies in his continued presence in the United States, where his help is inestimable.' The Colonel suggested to Wilson that he put the Mission in charge of the heads of the two most important departments concerned. 'What would you think of McAdoo and Baker?'<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the British and French leaders, aside from Mr. Balfour, made clear their conviction that the proposed Mission should be headed by Colonel House. The British War Cabinet notified Wiseman that they felt 'that in view of the forthcoming international conference it was of great importance that a man in the complete confidence of the President should visit Western Europe in order to obtain first-hand information in regard to the position of the Allies, and Colonel House seemed to them the only suitable person.'

Similar messages came direct from France, of which the following is typical. It was sent through Ambassador Jusserand: 'Please tell Colonel House that it is absolutely indispensable that he should come over, even for a week, on board a warship to avoid delay. He must see all the details of the situation before plans are definitely adopted.'

*Mr. A. H. Frazier to Colonel House*

PARIS, October 12, 1917

DEAR MR. HOUSE:

A report was brought to me a few days ago by a trustworthy person that M. Painlevé, the Prime Minister and Minister of War, had expressed the earnest hope that you might come to France in the near future. . . .

In the fourth year of the war, with every one rather weary of the whole thing, I seem to notice more signs of lack of harmony between the Allies than ever before. As we are the most disinterested nation engaged and as we have the con-

<sup>1</sup> House to Wilson, September 24, 1917.

fidence of all the Allies to a greater extent than any other country, I believe it is our logical rôle to unite the Allies in concerted action and to act as a general harmonizing influence. You are far better able to judge than I whether it is advisable for you to come to Europe at the present time, but I am sure that if you should decide to come now you would find a very warm welcome in France.

Respectfully yours

ARTHUR HUGH FRAZIER

Early in October President Wilson decided definitely that the proposed American Mission was necessary and that he would appoint Colonel House as its head. Sir William Wiseman tells the whole in a cable to the Foreign Office.

*Sir William Wiseman to Sir Eric Drummond*

NEW YORK, October 13, 1917

‘Ever since Reading and I arrived in the States, we have been urging that the United States Government should send fully empowered representatives to London or Paris to deal at first-hand with the Allied Governments on the most urgent questions which require coöperation.

‘Reading had an interview with the President on the subject soon after arrival, and has discussed it on several occasions with other members of the Administration, while I have very frequently discussed it with House, who has been in New York. In the meantime invitations and suggestions were received from the French and Italian Commissions and from various departments of our Government through the Embassy and Northcliffe, requesting the United States Government to send representatives on various matters, particularly supplies. . . .

‘After several discussions between the President and House, and a meeting with Reading yesterday, the President said that his policy had been not to send American represen-

tatives to sit in the councils of the Allies because he felt the United States had not enough experience in the war, but on the information that we had given him he had changed his mind and come to the conclusion that it was necessary for the United States to be represented. . . . He informed House definitely that he would not send any one unless House would go, and asked him to proceed to Europe as soon as possible, and stay there as special American representative until the end of the war.

‘House was very much opposed to going at all, because he has devoted all his energies to the subject which interests him most, namely: that of peace terms and the American case for the Peace Conference. . . . As foreshadowed in my previous cables he has tried to get the President to send either Baker or Lansing or both. Finally he agreed to accept the mission provided it was clearly understood that it was to be only for the purpose of attending the Interallied War Council, and that he would be able to return to the States immediately that was finished.’

WISEMAN

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *October 14, 1917*

I am authorized by French and British Cabinets to extend to you a most cordial invitation to take part in conversations and conferences on all questions of War and Peace. It is with the greatest gratification that they have learnt of the probability that this invitation may prove acceptable. I cannot speak officially of Italians and Russians, but you may safely assume that they share our interests. . . .

BALFOUR



*Lord Reading to President Wilson*

WASHINGTON, October 15, 1917

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

I communicated the substance of our recent conversation to my Government and have to-day received a reply which I thought right to bring immediately to your notice.

I am now authorized by the French and British Governments to express their earnest hope that it will prove possible for your Government to send a representative to Europe to discuss important military and other questions of vital interest to co-belligerents. My Government has learnt with the utmost gratification that the invitation is likely to receive your favourable consideration.

The British Ambassador and I waited upon the Secretary of State this morning and conveyed this message to him. I understand that the French Ambassador, as the doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, will, without delay, present the formal invitation to the Secretary of State.

My Government is also extremely pleased to learn that it may hope for the invaluable presence of Colonel House as the representative of the United States.

I am, dear Mr. President,

Yours sincerely

READING

These papers are of some historical importance, since they furnish an answer to the criticism, later voiced in certain American circles, directed against the President's choice of a private citizen as head of the first American War Mission. The choice was not dictated by personal favoritism, but was made with the express endorsement of those who understood the situation in Europe and the problems which the American Mission would have to meet.

## V

In discussing the character of American representation in Allied councils, House had asked Wiseman to draft for the President a memorandum outlining the desires of the Allies. There were three councils planned in which the United States ought to be represented. Sir William described them for Wilson and House as follows:

*Wiseman Memorandum on Interallied Coöperation*

NEW YORK, October 10, 1917

‘1. The Allied Council of War.’<sup>1</sup>

‘This council is composed of representatives of the Allied Governments including naval and military representatives. This council has met before and will meet again whenever it is found necessary. The members of the council have supreme authority from their Governments to discuss the political aims of the Allies and the various military objectives which may help to realize these aims. The next meeting of this council is fixed for October 15th in Paris, and the most important matter which will be discussed at this meeting of the council is the military strategy to be employed by the Allies in the coming year, as, in modern warfare on as large a scale as the present war, it is necessary to determine the military strategy and lay out plans at least six months before they can come to fruition.

‘It is necessary, therefore, for the Allies to meet within the next few weeks and settle the military plans which they hope to carry out successfully next spring and summer. It was this council which was referred to in the letter which the President received. It would be possible, of course, for

<sup>1</sup> Sir William’s term ‘Council of War,’ to describe the general conferences of the Allies, should not be interpreted to mean that there was any real coöperative organization. It was precisely to meet the lack of such an organization that the Supreme War Council was created at Rapallo on November 7.

American representatives to attend this council and return to Washington when the council had concluded its session. The meeting now fixed for the 15th of October could not be postponed, but it would be quite possible for the meeting to adjourn to a future date in order to await the arrival of the American representatives.

‘2. The Interallied Council.

‘This council has not been formed, but the subject has been under discussion for some months and was first suggested by Mr. McAdoo. The object of this council would be to regulate supplies amongst the Allies. All requisitions made on behalf of any of the Allied Governments for money, munitions of war, food, shipping, coal, etc., would be passed upon by this council. The purpose would be to determine which requisition ought to have priority for the good of the common cause. It is suggested that the council should sit in London, but that the section dealing with finance should be located in Paris. This council would, of course, sit permanently until the end of the war.

‘3. The Joint Embargo or Blockade Council.

‘This council is not yet in existence, but it would be intended to provide effective machinery to carry out joint negotiations with neutral countries. The Exports Board at Washington is already acting informally with the British and French experts. The proposed council would ensure that British blockade measures should not clash with the policy of the American Government. The main business of the council would be to regulate supplies to neutral countries. This council would also sit permanently until the end of the war, but would have its headquarters in London.’

Wiseman was insistent, and Colonel House agreed with him, that the latter should make it plain that his visit was temporary and that he would not take direct charge of the work of coördinating the problems of finance, supply, ship-

ping, and embargo, which ought to be left in the care of the chiefs of the different war boards. His functions would be to represent the United States in the discussion of general policy in the main council and to arrange for a mechanism to decide technical questions. Wiseman wrote House definitely on this point, for at first Wilson seemed inclined to give House direct charge of all matters of coördination, and even to appoint a permanent American Commission with offices in Europe.

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

NEW YORK, October 10, 1917

DEAR MR. HOUSE:

. . . It must be quite clear that the three councils are entirely separate and do not in any way depend on one another. . . . The British Government, and I am quite sure the French and Italian agree with us, want you to attend council number one as the American representative. We also want American representatives on councils two and three, but I feel strongly that you ought not to be concerned with the operations of two and three. When we first suggested that you come to Europe to attend council number one we naturally thought of it as a temporary visit because, of course, this council would not sit for more than a week or so. . . .

I believe that if you . . . stay in Europe to the end of the war you cannot avoid dealing with all the problems that arise after they have reached a certain point of importance. It would seem to me better to face the situation from the outset and realize that your Government is taking a very important step [in planning a permanent American Mission to Europe]. In my opinion it is no less than shifting the centre of gravity of the war from Washington to London and Paris. . . .

From the point of view of carrying on the war most effectively I have no doubt that it would be best to send a permanent American Commission with offices in both London



and Paris. The Commission should have both naval and military representatives on all the three councils we have mentioned. This, in my opinion, is the only practicable and effective way of getting coöperation, but there remain the two difficulties to be overcome. In the first place, you must contemplate delegating an important part of the American Government to the Commission; and secondly, you must consider whether, if you go as head of the Commission, it would be possible for you to keep clear of the many vital problems which arise daily in the coöperation of the Allies, and devote sufficient time to those problems which are really the most important and which you have made your particular study.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

W. WISEMAN

'Shifting the center of gravity of the war from Washington to London and Paris' was quite contrary to Wilson's determination to preserve American independence of action and policy. He decided, therefore, that there should be no permanent general American Commission in Europe, but that House should take with him representatives of the different supply boards and of the army and navy, to discuss with their 'opposites' in England and France the technique of co-ordination. On the other hand, as soon as the Allies learned of the decision to send House, they agreed to adjourn the meeting of the main council until his arrival in Europe.

President Wilson wrote to House, on October 8, that he was ready to take up the important matters we ought to confer about. Any time you name this week would be convenient, if you will come down, and I hope that it may be soon. With affectionate messages. . . .<sup>1</sup> Colonel House went to Washington the following day.

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, October 8, 1917.

*'October 13, 1917: I have had three or four strenuous days. The White House motor met us. . . . The President was over at the offices, having just finished a Cabinet meeting.*

*'The President and I had no conversations at lunch or dinner, but after dinner we went into executive session until ten o'clock. We threshed out the question of my going abroad to represent the United States at the Allied War Council. . . . Wiseman has pointed out the danger of transferring the center of gravity from this country to Europe. He believes this is inevitable if I go abroad to remain as long as the President has in mind, and take with me a military, naval, and economic staff.*

*'This shook the President because he has no intention of loosening his hold on the situation. . . .*

*'Reading came at noon and remained for an hour. . . . Reading knew what the President intended to propose, and the President knew what Reading expected. He seemed pleased with the President's reception. I walked to the door with him and he asked me to meet him at five o'clock at the British Embassy for a further conference. . . .*

*'I have made it clear to both the British and French Governments that we wish to go in the simplest way possible. There must be no banquets, no receptions, but merely conferences to transact business as speedily as possible.*

*'At our conference Tuesday night, the President authorized me to see both Baker and Daniels and tell them of our plans and ask them to suggest suitable military and naval officers to accompany me. The President thought General Bliss, Chief of Staff, would be the proper man to represent the Army, in which Baker later readily acquiesced. Baker sent for Bliss while I was at the War Department, and the three of us had some talk upon the subject. When I visited the Navy Department, Daniels suggested Admiral Benson. . . .'*

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, October 16, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

... I hope you will send Vance McCormick <sup>1</sup> over with me to look into the British methods regarding the embargo. It would please them to have him come, and it could not fail to be of value to us in working out this problem over here.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

'October 19, 1917: The French Ambassador called unexpectedly to convey an invitation from the British, French, and Italian Governments to attend the War Council in Paris. He said I would be the only representative in the Council who was not a high official; that the Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries of all the Allied Nations would be present with the exception of Russia, which now has no stable government....

'Jusserand promised to cable his Government requesting that no official or private entertainments be given, at least until the conference ends.

'October 21, 1917: The Russian Ambassador called at 9.30. He came to say that it was essential for the War Council which is to meet in Paris to recognize Russia's political as well as her war needs. He believes it would strengthen the present government and perhaps enable it to maintain itself. It is evident that the Russians feel they are in bad repute with the other Allies....

'October 23, 1917: The President decided this morning that it would be well for me to take over representatives of the Army, Navy, Munitions, Food, Finances, Shipping, and Embargo. When he first asked me to go on this trip he wished me to go alone. I had some difficulty in per-

<sup>1</sup> Chairman of the War Trade Board.

suading him that I could not possibly confer with the heads of the Allied Governments on matters of policy, and in addition confer with the War, Navy, Treasury, Shipping, Munitions, Food, and Embargo Departments of those Governments.

‘It took the better part of the day seeing the proposed staff and explaining the purposes of the trip. Admiral Benson has arranged for the transportation. We are to have two cruisers and a destroyer, and we are to be met at the danger zone with four other destroyers.

‘*October 24, 1917: [Conversation with Wilson.]* He outlined a “letter of marque” for me to use with the Governments of Great Britain, France, and Italy. Neither of us knew how it should be addressed, whether to the sovereigns or prime ministers. It was decided to consult the State Department to-day, which I have done. Lansing thinks, since the invitation came to participate in the War Council through the French Ambassador, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, that the acceptance should go through the same channel. Therefore the President wrote a letter to the Secretary of State, asking him to inform the French Ambassador that he was pleased to accept the invitation of the Allied Governments to participate in the War Council and that he had commissioned me to represent him. He decided that I should also keep the letter he wrote last night addressed to the Prime Ministers, even though that was not the proper procedure. . . .’

## VI

The American Government made plain its expectation that the Mission would be devoted entirely to business. Reading sent word to the Prime Minister: ‘House desires no public functions. His visit must be regarded as exclusively devoted to affairs of state.’

‘House is very insistent,’ wrote Wiseman to the Foreign



Office, 'on not having any public banquets or lunches; at any rate, none which he has to attend personally. You know that he is not strong physically and has a perfect horror of public functions. I presume some of the other members of the Commission could make the few necessary speeches and appearances at lunches, but you should be very careful to keep House out of anything of that sort.

'May I remind you that the Americans hate cold houses, and it is important that the places should be steam-heated, as they do not think fires are enough. . . .'

On October 24, House received from the President what he called his 'letter of marque' for presentation to the Allied Governments, an interesting document since it gave him practically a power of attorney for Mr. Wilson. As it turned out, the credentials were never presented. House's position rested upon something far less tangible than letters patent and something far more effective: the confidence of the President of the United States, who by reason of his office was for the moment the most powerful individual in the world.

### *Official Credentials*

WASHINGTON, *October 24, 1917*

GENTLEMEN:

I have taken the liberty of commissioning my friend, Mr. Edward M. House, the bearer of this letter, to represent me in the general conference presently to be held by the Governments associated in war with the Central Powers, and in any other conferences he may be invited and thinks it best to take part in for the purpose of contributing what he can to the clarification of common counsel, the concerting of the best possible plans of action, and the establishment of the most effective methods of coöperation. I bespeak for him your generous consideration.

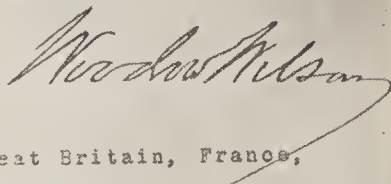
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Gentlemen:

I have taken the liberty of commissioning my friend, Mr. Edward M. House, the bearer of this letter, to represent me in the general conference presently to be held by the governments associated in war with the Central Powers, and in any other conferences he may be invited and think it best to take part in, for the purpose of contributing what he can to the clarification of common counsel the concerting of the best possible plans of action, and the establishment of the most effective methods of cooperation. I bespeak for him your generous consideration.

With great respect, and the most earnest hope that our common efforts will lead to an early and decisive victory,

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "Woodrow Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

The Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France,  
and Italy.



With great respect, and the most earnest hope that our common efforts will lead to an early and decisive victory.

Sincerely yours

WOODROW WILSON

To the Prime Ministers of  
Great Britain,  
France and  
Italy.

Wilson closed the covering letter to House: I hate to say good-bye. It is an immense comfort to me to have you at hand here for counsel and for friendship. But it is right that you should go. God bless you and keep you both. My thought will follow you all the weeks through, and I hope that it will be only weeks that will separate us.<sup>1</sup>

The American War Mission left on October 28 for Halifax, there to embark upon the cruisers *Huntington* and *St. Louis*. It included representatives of all the important war-making agencies whose coöperation with those of the Allies had become essential. The Navy was represented by Rear Admiral W. S. Benson, chief of naval operations, an office corresponding to the British First Sea Lord, who by his position as well as his ability was inevitably designated as the man to discuss naval coördination with the British and French. The Army was represented by its highest official after the President, the Chief of Staff, General Tasker H. Bliss, later distinguished by his service as a member of the Supreme War Council and the American Peace Commission. Oscar T. Crosby, a graduate of West Point, electrical engineer and financier, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, was placed in charge of financial problems, aided by the eminent metropolitan lawyer, Paul Cravath, as legal adviser. Embargo and blockade problems were in charge of Vance C. McCormick, chairman of the War Trade Board. The Shipping Board was represented by Bainbridge Colby, and the

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, October 24, 1917.



Food Administration by Alonzo E. Taylor, who, as physiological chemist, close observer of famine conditions in Europe, and assistant to Herbert Hoover, was recognized as an outstanding authority. Thomas Nelson Perkins, legal adviser to the War Industries Board and a member of the Priority Board, represented the United States in the discussions on priority of shipments. It was a distinguished group.

‘October 29, 1917: Our private car was ready for us,’ wrote House, ‘at the Pennsylvania Station last night by ten o’clock. Bainbridge Colby and Nelson Perkins were already on board. We were picked up at four o’clock in the morning by the special train from Washington which is to take our party to Halifax. . . .

‘No one is allowed to leave the train en route to Halifax. X tells me that his wife has not the remotest idea where he is going. He merely told her that he was to be absent some time on a trip which it was necessary for the moment to keep secret. He did not know himself from what port he was to embark; in fact, no one [apart from Commander Carter] knows this excepting Admiral Benson and myself.

‘November 3, 1917: [On board U.S. Cruiser *Huntington*.] The discussion on shipboard is almost entirely of submarines, their methods of working, the way they are to be met, and every possible detail of that subject. One is reminded of the time when people took ship in earlier days and did nothing but discuss pirates and the possibility of being attacked, robbed, and sunk by them.

‘November 4, 1917: The decks have been cleared for action, the sitting-room in the rear of our private dining-room is now filled with gunners, crews of fourteen each, to operate the two stern guns on this deck. There is a constant going in and out, both during the day and night, and unless one is a good sleeper, as I am, it would be impossible to get much rest.’

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

LONDON, November 6, 1917

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

A thousand welcomes to our shores. I promise that you will not be smothered with hospitality! . . .

Sincerely yours

ARTHUR JAMES BALFOUR

The Mission disembarked safely at Plymouth on November 7, and was met by Admiral Jellicoe, British First Sea Lord, and Admiral Sims. A special train brought them to London, where on the platform of Paddington Station, at the stroke of midnight, Mr. Balfour and Ambassador Page greeted this first manifestation of America's determination to achieve coöperative endeavor in waging war.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONFERENCES IN LONDON

General Smuts . . . is one of the few men . . . who do not seem tired. He is alert, energetic and forceful. . . .

*Colonel House's Diary, November 13, 1917*

#### I

THE House Mission arrived in Europe at a moment of extreme crisis in the fortunes of war. In November, 1917, the Allied cause was overshadowed by a double disaster: the collapse of the Italian army at Caporetto and the advent to power of the Bolsheviki in Russia. The situation was perhaps the gravest which the Allies had faced since 1914. No longer was it a question, as it had been in the spring, how best to defeat Germany; the problem was now, how to escape defeat.

On Wednesday, October 24, the Austrians, reënforced by carefully chosen German divisions, attacked Cadorna. Aided by the weather, which seemed designed for the German tactics of surprise, General Below broke the Italian defense at Caporetto and through the breach the Germans poured down on the plain of Friuli. The Second Italian Army, 'weary with the autumn offensive, weakened with discontent and treason, and shattered by the impact of the new tactics, had become a fugitive rabble. . . . Streaming back in wild disorder to the Friulian plain, it uncovered the Duke of Aosta's flank, and seemed to imprison him between the invaders and the Adriatic. The suspicion that treachery had in some degree contributed to the disaster was like to make the retreat more difficult, for such news spreads like a fever among troops and saps their resolution. The huge salient had broken at the apex, and every mile of retirement on the east meant a complex withdrawal on the north. Upon

forces wearied with a long campaign descended in a black accumulation every element of peril which had threatened Italy since she first drew the sword.' <sup>1</sup>

Italy was saved from complete disaster partly through the valor and speed of the Third Army under the Duke of Aosta, partly because the enemy themselves, surprised by the immensity of their triumph, were unready to exploit it. By November 10 what was left of the Italian armies was behind the Piave, the sole defense for Venice and a poor defense at that. British and French divisions were crossing the Alps to stiffen the resistance. But the Italians had lost effectives which in a month of fighting reached the appalling total of about three quarters of a million men.

It was just as the House Mission reached England that the full magnitude of the Italian disaster was recognized. Two days later news came from Petrograd that the Kerensky Government had been overthrown, and that on November 8 Lenin had seized control. Within three weeks the Bolshevik dictatorship was firmly established and the Allied leaders were brought face to face with the imminent withdrawal of Russia from the war. For at the moment of seizing the reins of government, the Bolsheviks proposed an armistice to all the belligerents, and approved the notable manifesto marking the Soviet's first official step towards a 'just and democratic peace.' Such a peace was defined as 'an immediate peace without annexations (that is, without seizure of foreign territory, without the forcible annexation of foreign nationalities) and without indemnities.' On November 22, Trotsky advised the Allied Ambassadors in Petrograd of the Soviet's proposals. 'I have the honor to request you,' continued the new Commissary for Foreign Affairs, 'to consider the above-mentioned document as a formal proposal for an immediate armistice on all fronts and the immediate opening of peace negotiations.'

<sup>1</sup> John Buchan, *A History of the Great War*, iv, 53, 55.



For some months the Allied leaders had watched the disintegration of the military power of Russia and confessed that the chance of receiving effective assistance on the Eastern Front was slight. But the advent of the Bolsheviks, if it resulted in a separate peace, meant that Germany would be free to withdraw her troops in great masses from the East and resume the position of numerical superiority on the Western Front which she had not held since the first days of the war.

The crisis which followed Caporetto and the danger that the end of the war in the East would permit Germany to concentrate in overwhelming strength in the West, stimulated Lloyd George to the decision which he had been pondering for some time, and which he had discussed with Sir Henry Wilson in August. If the Allies had been unable to win when holding numerical superiority over the enemy, what chance had they now, unless they adopted new methods? Reliance upon the hammer-and-tongs strategy of the General Staff, he argued, had resulted in tremendous losses in man-force and no material gains. Allied strength had never been pooled, and each army had done what seemed right in its own eyes, with the result that one by one they had been defeated. The sole hope for the Allies lay in regarding the battlefields as a single front and in the establishment of unity of command. Lloyd George in a speech at Paris on November 12 publicly affirmed the failure of Allied military policy, as he reviewed the strategical errors of the past three years:

‘It is true we sent forces to Salonika to rescue Serbia, but, as usual, they were sent too late. . . . Half the men who fell in the futile attempt to break through on the Western Front in September of that year would have saved Serbia, would have saved the Balkans and completed the blockade of Germany . . . 1915 was the year of tragedy for Serbia; 1916

was the year of tragedy for Rumania . . . it was the Serbian story almost without a variation. . . . The Italian disaster may yet save the alliance. . . . National and professional traditions, prestige and susceptibilities all conspired to render nugatory our best resolutions. . . . The war has been prolonged by sectionalism; it will be shortened by solidarity.'

The same thought was expressed by the French Prime Minister, M. Painlevé, who insisted: 'One Front, One Army, One Nation — that is the programme of the future victory.'

There was nothing new in this insistence upon the need of unified command. Very early in the war the waste involved in the lack of central control became obvious; 'the probable action of the enemy was inadequately studied and not always foreseen; and when measures to meet it had eventually to be taken, hurried conferences, panic-decisions, incomplete preparations, and conflicting aims were the natural result.'<sup>1</sup> Various schemes were put forward, designed to achieve coördination of strategy, but actual unity seemed impossible because of the natural unwillingness of the British to accept a French generalissimo and the equally natural assumption by the French that no foreigner could command Allied armies fighting on French soil. It is true that early in 1917 Mr. Lloyd George agreed to a temporary and local arrangement which placed Sir Douglas Haig under the orders of General Nivelle, during the course of the spring offensive. But the failure of the operations that followed merely reaffirmed the opposition of the British military leaders to a single supreme command in the hands of the French. 'The main result,' wrote General Bliss, 'was mutual recrimination and the belief of British troops that they had been sacrificed in a hopeless attempt to secure

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen*, I, 192.

success for their ally.’<sup>1</sup> ‘The necessity for coördinating the management of the war was fully appreciated,’ wrote the British Chief of Staff, ‘both by Ministers and soldiers long before so-called unity of command became a political catch-word at the end of 1917. The necessity was admitted by everybody. The difficulty was to determine the method by which coördination could be effected.’<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Lloyd George recognized the impossibility of persuading British opinion at this time to accept a generalissimo. Such a suggestion would almost certainly have brought about the overthrow of his Government. On November 19 he told the House of Commons that the appointment of a generalissimo ‘would produce real friction, and might really produce not merely friction between the Armies, but friction between the nations and the Government.’<sup>3</sup> He was equally opposed to a system of coördination that might be secured by joint action of the British and French Chiefs of Staff, partly, perhaps, because of his lack of confidence in the ‘traditionalism’ of the professional soldiers.

According to the memoirs of M. Painlevé, then Premier of France, he had proposed to Mr. Lloyd George, three months previous, the creation of an interallied staff with General Foch as its chief.<sup>4</sup> The proposal differed in principle from that made to Mr. Lloyd George by Sir Henry Wilson, since Painlevé’s plan would have included the Chiefs of Staff and made Foch essentially generalissimo, while Wilson’s looked to the organization of a War Council superior to the Chiefs of Staff and excluding them. On October 30, after the disaster of Caporetto, Mr. Lloyd George wrote to M. Painlevé a long letter outlining the British suggestion

<sup>1</sup> Tasker H. Bliss, ‘The Unified Command,’ in *Foreign Affairs*, December 15, 1922, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Robertson, *op. cit.*, I, 213.      <sup>3</sup> Hansard, November 19, 1917, p. 896.

<sup>4</sup> Painlevé, *Comment j’ai nommé Foch et Pétain*, 240 ff.



for 'a sort of interallied staff,' which should be political in its composition although to it would be attached military and, if possible, naval and economic experts.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George's letter and his plan for a war council were carefully studied by the French experts, who finally accepted its principle and drafted thereupon a definite constitution for the new organization. On November 5, the British and French Prime Ministers left for Italy, where at Rapallo, on the Italian Riviera, they were awaited by the Italian Premier, Orlando, and his Foreign Secretary, Sonnino. After two days of discussion the plan for this interallied council was approved, and the new organization called the Supreme War Council (*Conseil Supérieure de Guerre*).

No one could criticize the effort to coördinate Allied military policy. Whether the Supreme War Council would succeed in achieving unity of military control was another question. The functions of the new organization were not clearly defined.<sup>2</sup> It was essentially a political body composed of 'the Prime Minister and a member of the Government of each of the great Powers whose armies are fighting on that [the Western] Front.' It was not to act as a commander-in-chief, 'but as an agency for the adoption and maintenance of a general policy for the Allies in the prosecution of the war, consistent with the total resources available and the most

<sup>1</sup> The text of this letter, translated into French for the benefit of the French War Council, is printed in Mermeix, *Le commandement unique: Foch et les armées d'occident*, 164-68. M. Painlevé ascribes to himself credit for originating the Supreme War Council idea and he insists that Mr. Lloyd George had agreed to his proposals a fortnight before Caporetto. (*Comment j'ai nommé Foch et Pétain*, 256). He apparently failed to perceive that Lloyd George could not possibly at that time accept an interallied staff headed by Foch, and that there was the same difference between the French and British ideas then as later, regarding the inclusion or the exclusion of the Chiefs of Staff. The text of Lloyd George's letter of October 30 makes this clear; obviously in this letter he is not accepting Painlevé's proposals but himself setting forth a new plan.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the Rapallo agreement is printed in the appendix to this chapter.



effective distribution of those resources among the various theaters of operations.’<sup>1</sup>

It may have been sound policy to give the new council a political character, and it was essential to find a compromise between French insistence upon a single military command and the British objection to putting their troops under foreign control. But the nature of the compromise and the vagueness in the definition of the functions of the Supreme War Council resulted in misunderstanding and criticism. Upon Mr. Lloyd George fell the burden of advocacy of the new venture, for the French Ministry was overthrown on November 13. M. Painlevé resigned, and three days later the historic Clemenceau Ministry was formed.<sup>2</sup>

In the mean time Mr. Lloyd George hurried back to England to face the parliamentary crisis which followed his criticism of the conduct of the war by the professional soldiers and which threatened to throw him out of office. His task of winning support for the new interallied organization was not facilitated by the criticism of the British Chief of Staff and that of the British Army Council, which raised strong objections to the plan of excluding the Chiefs of Staff from the Supreme War Council.<sup>3</sup> ‘Strange to say,’ wrote General Bliss, ‘in the light of recent experience — the thing which carried most weight with the public was the allegation that a deliberate attempt was being made to surrender national for interallied control. This is of no consequence now except as showing how little ripe was either the civilian or military sentiment for a unified command in the field.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bliss, ‘The Unified Command,’ in *Foreign Affairs*, December 15, 1922, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Painlevé’s fall was not the result of his advocacy of the Supreme War Council, which was approved by a vote of 250–192. His ministry was overthrown by a hostile vote, the same day, in the matter of the Malvy-Caillaux prosecutions.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, *op.cit.*, I, 216.

<sup>4</sup> Bliss, *op.cit.*, 7.

## II

The House Mission was thus greeted upon its arrival in Europe by a situation in which the technical problems of coördination between the United States and the Allies were thrust into the background by the larger question of inter-allied unity as a whole. That question must be settled or the combination of disasters that threatened the Allies might prove fatal. The defection of Russia and the rout of Italian armies clouded the entire landscape. The French Government was in dissolution. Whether Mr. Lloyd George himself could maintain his position and his policy of unification seemed doubtful.

It was natural that the British Prime Minister should look for the support of the American Mission, which occupied in the public mind a position of peculiar importance that was indicated by numerous articles in the newspapers, emphasizing the resources of the United States. 'Colonel House and his distinguished colleagues have arrived at the critical moment,' said the *London Spectator* on November 17. 'Their influence will be invaluable in the somewhat perturbed councils of the Allies.' Mr. Grasty cabled to the *New York Times*, commenting upon the turn of fate that had made of House 'the bearer of encouragement and reassurance to all civilized Europe. . . . Never in history has any foreigner come to Europe and found greater acceptance or wielded more power. Behind this super-Ambassador, whose authority and activities are unique, stands the President . . . and behind the President stands the country whose measureless resources and unshakable will are counted a sure shield against the successful sweep of Prussianism.'<sup>1</sup>

Returning to London on November 13, Mr. Lloyd George invited Colonel House to dinner with him alone the same evening. House knew that Wilson desired to assist any

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, November 18, 1917.

scheme that promised real unity of Allied policy. Whether or not he would agree to actual participation in the Supreme War Council by United States representatives was less certain, although House regarded it as advisable so far as the military end of the Council was concerned.

*'November 13, 1917: George wished to explain his attitude regarding the Supreme War Council,' wrote House in his diary, 'and to convince me that the United States should sit in. . . . I gave my reasons for thinking it would not be wise for us to have a representative who at all times would sit in with the Allied Prime Ministers and Ministers for Foreign Affairs. I promised to recommend that General Bliss, or some other military personage, should sit with the military branch of it. George was satisfied with this, but he wished me to consent to his making a statement in the House of Commons to-morrow that we approved the idea and would send a representative. I declined emphatically to permit this until it had been submitted to Washington.*

*'He said that Pétain and Cadorna thoroughly approve the plan. He also said that Pétain does not approve of future offensives on the Western Front. If George has his way, and if he represents Pétain correctly, there will be no further offensives in France, but they will wait until the United States can throw her strength on the Allied side or until Russia can recover sufficiently to make a drive on the Eastern Front. I suggested if we definitely decided upon that policy, it might be well to make a public statement. The Germans would not receive with enthusiasm the thought that the Allies on the Western Front proposed sitting still and holding the line until the end of 1918 or the beginning of 1919, when the United States could bring her full power against them. George concurred in this view, but we left it for further discussion.'*



*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *November 13, 1917*

The Prime Minister arrived to-day. I dined with him alone to-night to have a frank conference.

The Italian situation is desperate. Venice will fall.<sup>1</sup> French and British troops are being rushed to the front and they should be ready for action by November twentieth.

France, England, and Italy have agreed to form a Supreme War Council and believe that it is imperative that we should be represented in it because of the moral effect that it will have here. I am cabling you through the Department a copy of the agreement as signed at Rapallo.

I would advise not having a representative on the civil end as designated in Article One, but would strongly urge having General Bliss on the military end as described in Article Five. It is important that an immediate decision be made as to this so that it can be announced that America is in full coördination with England, France, and Italy.

It is necessary to do everything possible at this time to encourage our friends here and in France. . . .

It is not probable that another offensive will be made on the French front until the spring, or until the Americans are strong enough to give material assistance, or the Russians recover sufficiently to resume on the East. It looks like a waiting game. I will advise of this further in a later dispatch.

EDWARD HOUSE

The cable sent by Wilson in reply was vigorous and offered full support for the Supreme War Council. The cipher cables from the President to House were, in accordance with the invariable rule of the State Department, put into a para-

<sup>1</sup> House's pessimism was not justified by the event, for Venice was saved.



phrase when deciphered. It is this paraphrase and not the original text of the cable that is published. The paraphrased text of the cable to House is as follows:

*Paraphrase of Wilson's Cable to House*

WASHINGTON, November 16, 1917

Please take the position that we not only approve a continuance of the plan for a war council but insist on it. We can no more take part in the war successfully without such a council than we can lend money without the board Crosby went over to join. The War Council, I assume, will eventually take the place of such conferences as you went over to take part in, and I hope that you will consider remaining to take part in, at any rate, the first deliberations and help in the formulating of plans. Baker and I are agreed that Bliss should be our military member. . . .

Colonel House did not hand this text to Mr. Lloyd George for use in the House of Commons debate, since he feared that President Wilson might appear to be advocating a particular plan of achieving Allied unity. In view of the difference of opinion that had been raised by the Rapallo Agreement and the opposition of influential members of the House of Commons, including Mr. Asquith, there was danger of the American President's being involved in an issue of British domestic politics. Hence House rephrased the cable from Wilson so as to avoid committing the President to any specific plan, but in such a way as to emphasize his insistence upon the principle of Allied unity.

*Published Statement of American War Mission*

'Colonel House . . . has received a cable from the President stating emphatically that the Government of the United States considers that unity of plan and control between all

the Allies and the United States is essential in order to achieve a just and permanent peace. The President emphasizes the fact that this unity must be accomplished if the great resources of the United States are to be used to the best advantage, and he requests Colonel House to confer with the heads of the Allied Governments with a view to achieving the closest possible coöperation. President Wilson has asked Colonel House to attend the first meeting of the Supreme War Council with General Bliss . . . as the Military Adviser. It is hoped that the meeting will take place in Paris before the end of this month.’<sup>1</sup>

*November 17, 1917:* Lloyd George has been after me several times to know our decision as to the Supreme War Council. If favorable, he desires to announce it in the House of Commons on Monday.

‘*November 18, 1917:* I was careful in the statement not to approve specifically the Lloyd George plan, but I simply approved the general idea of unity of action and unity of control of resources. Before I consented to give out the statement, I had Reading telephone George and obtain a definite promise from him that there should be a meeting of the Supreme War Council held immediately after the general Interallied Conference in Paris. I did this to meet the President’s insistence that I should attend at least one meeting. Lloyd George readily promised.

‘*November 21, 1917:* Last night I read to Lloyd George and Reading the cable which the President actually sent. Lloyd George asked why I had not published it as the President sent it rather than diluting it as I did. My reply was that I considered it too strong, and while I desired to help I did not want to overdo it, which I thought the message in its entirety would do.’

The effect of the President’s message was all that the sup-

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, November 19, 1917.

porters of the Rapallo Agreement could hope for. *The Times* devoted a leading article to the promise of American participation, and described Wilson's endorsement as 'incomparably the most important development of the Allied Council scheme. . . . It is as guarded in tone as it is comprehensive in scope. . . . It does emphasize unmistakably the central principle for which Mr. Lloyd George is standing at this moment—that "unity of plan and control" which received partial recognition at Rapallo.'

The debate in the House of Commons upon Lloyd George's demand for greater unity of control, as expressed in his Paris speech and in the creation of the Supreme War Council, took place on Monday, November 19. Its importance and the relation of it to Wilson's cabled message were mirrored in the Press.

'It is a long time,' said *The Times*, 'since so much interest has been shown in advance in a parliamentary debate as in that which takes place in the House of Commons to-day on the creation of an Allied War Council and the Prime Minister's Paris speech. . . . The project of a Vote of Censure, which was open to the Opposition, was apparently rejected as unwise. Nevertheless, the Government have sent out an urgent three-line "whip" to their supporters, and an unusually large attendance of members, judged by war-time standards, is expected. . . .'

'To-night's debate on the Interallied War Council,' said the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 'finds an important prelude in the action of the American Government. President Wilson avows his strong conviction that "unity of plan and control" must link the United States with all the other Allies, and he has accordingly commissioned Colonel House to attend the first meeting of the new Council along with the American Chief of Staff. America, in short, claims her place in the concentration of method and force which some critics of the British



Government are still denouncing as impossible and improper. This striking step on the part of Washington will perhaps bring home to the objectors the utter insularity of the arguments they present, not to speak of the prejudices they try to rouse in reënforcement. They can scarcely fail to note that the opinion of our Allies is overwhelmingly in favour of that real and effective solidarity which Mr. Lloyd George demanded in his Paris speech. . . .’

The Prime Minister passed triumphantly through the parliamentary crisis. There was mild criticism on the part of the Opposition, but there was no serious attempt in the House of Commons to make an issue of the policy of coördination as expressed in the Rapallo Agreement, nor to force a division.

For a moment during the session of the following day, the matter seemed on the point of being reopened, as the result of a rumor that Colonel House had exaggerated Wilson’s endorsement of the Lloyd George plan.

*Statement issued through Reuter Agency, November 19, 1917*

WASHINGTON, *Monday*

‘President Wilson denies that he sent a cablegram to Colonel House stating that the United States considers that a united plan and control between the Allies and the United States is essential to a lasting peace. This denial was issued through Mr. Joseph Tumulty, the President’s private Secretary.’

Strictly speaking the denial was correct, for in his cable to House President Wilson had said nothing about ‘a lasting peace.’ These words, however, were implied in the cable and their introduction in House’s paraphrase did not affect the main sense of the message, which was that Wilson ‘insisted’ upon the War Council. The original authorization was in



fact stronger than House's paraphrase. Whether the statement was issued through misapprehension of the facts by Mr. Tumulty has never been made clear. Inasmuch as the President and Colonel House exchanged their cables in a special code known only to themselves, it is possible that because of pressure of time and business Mr. Tumulty was not informed of Wilson's cable of endorsement.

'November 20, 1917: This has been one of the most disturbing days,' wrote House, 'I have had since I have been here. For some unaccountable reason, a wireless was published in the papers this morning as coming from Washington, denying some parts of the statement I gave out Sunday. . . .

'It was disturbing to have such an incident occur when so much of real importance was to be done.'

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, November 20, 1917

A very difficult and dangerous situation has been rife here since the Prime Minister made his Paris speech announcing the formation of a Supreme War Council. . . . The announcement along with his implied criticism of the military authorities precipitated a political crisis that threatened to overturn his Ministry.

In the very critical condition of affairs elsewhere in the Allied States this might have proved the gravest disaster of the war. The Prime Minister was constantly urging me to say something to help the situation. This I refused to do until I had heard from you. The statement I gave out purposely refrained from approving the Prime Minister's plan, but merely stated the necessity for military unity and your instructions for Bliss and me to attend its first meeting following the Paris Interallied Conference.

The situation had become completely composed, but Tumulty's denial has started everything afresh, and the Government is to be questioned in the House of Commons this afternoon.

I am refraining from and am asking the Press to refrain from any further statements. If this is done the incident will be closed.

EDWARD HOUSE

On Tuesday afternoon the question was raised in the House of Commons as to whether the statement of Wilson's endorsement of the War Council could be regarded as authoritative, in view of the denial from Washington. But since no confirmation of the denial came, and as Colonel House had read to Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Reading the original Wilson cable, Mr. Bonar Law was able to say for the Government that they had the official guarantee of American approval. 'I had every newspaper and Government official on my back yesterday, because of it,' House wrote to Wilson on Wednesday. 'However, the incident is now happily closed.'

### III

During the course of this parliamentary crisis, which ended in the ratification of Lloyd George's Rapallo policy, the members of the American Mission, conscious of the immensity of the task of coördination and anxious to learn at first hand the essence of the problems for which they must find a solution, were brought into touch with the corresponding members of the British war boards.<sup>1</sup> They took up with them the questions of man-power, tonnage, finance, food, blockade, war industries.

<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that this chapter should not be regarded as attempting to give a comprehensive survey of the work of the Mission. The complete story can be found in the official but as yet unpublished records.

Through the courtesy of the Duke of Roxburghe the British Government made Colonel House their guest at Chesterfield House, with all its Gainsboroughs and Sir Joshuas, its old china and books, even its servants with cockades. The other members of the Mission were installed at Claridge's. In the library of Chesterfield House, built for Lord Chesterfield of the *Letters* by Izaak Ware, Colonel House carried on his interviews with journalists, standing in front of the chimney-piece with its Latin motto. 'It is one of the most beautiful rooms in London,' wrote the representative of the Manchester *Guardian* after an early conference with the head of the Mission, 'with a coved ceiling round which are panels of the great dames of the eighteenth century painted by famous hands. Around Colonel House, listening to the consolidated silence of his observations, was the world in the person of the news gatherers of America, England, and her dominions. It added new history to Chesterfield House.'

It was here for the most part that Colonel House devoted himself to political conferences with the British leaders. 'He sought,' wrote Wiseman, 'to find out the views of various Allied statesmen so that he might determine with whom he could most usefully coöperate.' The nature of his conferences is indicated in the following extracts from his journal.

'November 8, 1917: Lunch with Mr. Balfour. The only other guest was Sir Eric Drummond. . . . We made a survey of the entire field during and after luncheon. We spoke with the utmost candor. Mr. Balfour expressed great pleasure at our coming at this time and declared it meant much, not alone to Great Britain but to the Entente cause, on account of the *débâcle* in both Russia and Italy.

'He has made me feel that I have the confidence of his Government as much as I have of our own. . . .

'November 9, 1917: Drummond showed me a confidential despatch which Mr. Balfour has been sending British agents





DRAWING-ROOM, CHESTERFIELD HOUSE



MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE MISSION, NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1917





throughout the Empire. It had reference to the adjustment of differences, should any arise, between American and British commercial interests. . . . He showed me the latest despatches received concerning the Italian and Russian situations.

‘Sir George McDonough, Director of Military Intelligence, was an interesting caller. He is a canny Scot, and I did not get much from him. I learned afterward that it was because he feared Lloyd George might possibly ‘scrub his head’ if he told things which George desired to tell himself.

‘Lord Milner <sup>1</sup> followed McDonough. We found ourselves in agreement upon nearly all the subjects discussed. . . .

‘Milner is able enough and judicious enough to see where this war is leading Europe, and he has a keen desire to bring it to an end in some way that will not make the sacrifices futile.

‘*November 10, 1917*: . . . Bainbridge Colby followed to discuss the advisability of commandeering all neutral shipping in the world. My first thought is that Great Britain and the United States should not set a precedent that might some day return to haunt us, nor be parties to any action akin to what Germany has done in the violation of Belgium.

‘Before Colby left, Lord Robert Cecil was announced. Much to my surprise, Cecil agreed with Colby, the argument of both being that it would work to the advantage of the neutrals. This may be true, nevertheless it is a pretext upon which such high-handed action by powerful nations is always done. Lord Robert and I conferred after Colby left, taking up the embargo question, the shipping question, and many other subjects in which our countries have a common interest.

‘Lunched with Bonar Law at 11 Downing Street. There was no one present other than ourselves, excepting his daugh-

<sup>1</sup> Member of War Cabinet (Minister without Portfolio), 1916–18; Secretary of State for War, 1918–19; the greatest of British administrators of the period.

ter. Law is depressed and broken. Two of his sons have been killed and he cannot restrain his emotion in speaking of them. . . . The lunch was very simple. . . . He is practicing economy of food, which public men preach but seldom follow. After lunch we discussed the possibility of terminating the war and the war's aftermath. I told him of the President's purpose to address Congress on the subject of economic freedom, and to threaten Germany with an economic war in the event she refused to be a party to a just and lasting peace. He expressed unqualified approval. . . .

'Mr. Balfour and Lady Essex dined with us. After dinner Mr. Balfour and I retired to the library and conferred for more than an hour. At his request, I gave a detailed view of the situation at Washington. . . .

'We talked of the proposed Supreme War Council. Mr. Balfour followed up the argument Drummond made yesterday upon the same subject, concerning the advisability of the United States having representation in it. After analyzing the question for some time, he thought it would not be necessary for the United States to be constantly represented on the civil end, but that we should keep a permanent military representative on it. I suggested General Bliss as a suitable member. . . .

'*November 11, 1917*: Walked with Wiseman to Buckingham Palace this morning at eleven o'clock. . . . There was a large crowd at the gates watching the changing of the guards. I was with the King for nearly an hour. . . . He was exceedingly cordial. We talked of the naval situation, the army, munitions, airplanes, and the question of my sitting in the new Supreme War Council.

'*November 12, 1917*: [Sir William] Robertson is a plain, forceful soldier . . . without subterfuge. I was prepared to hear him criticize the proposed Supreme War Council, of which he is not to be a member. General Wilson, who is to be the military member, is not *en rapport* with either Robertson

or Haig. . . . He said the Turks had become rather assertive and it was necessary to give them 'a dressing down.' When that was done, nothing further at the moment was contemplated. I found him against dividing the Allied forces into the several expeditions this, that, or the other one thought advisable. He wishes to concentrate on the Western Front, and he believes in the British having control of their own forces without regard to France, for they might have to stand alone against the enemy. . . .

'Loulie and I lunched with the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace. Prince Albert and the Princess Mary were the only others present. We sat at a small table in a corner room overlooking Green Park and the Mall. It was as informal and as friendly as if it had been a family party. The lunch itself was simple. No wine was served. . . .

'I returned to Chesterfield House in order to receive Lord Curzon.

'Viscount Grey of Fallodon did me the honor of coming down from Northumberland to see me. He dined with us tonight. After dinner we had a long and interesting conference. . . .

'We reviewed the war from its beginning. He recalled our many conversations, and he was pleased when I brought to his mind what he had said about the sanctity of treaties, almost a year in advance of Germany's violation of Belgium. The occasion of his remarks was the Panama tolls controversy, a controversy which the President settled to the lasting glory of honest diplomacy.'

#### IV

'*November 13, 1917*: General Smuts was my first afternoon caller. Nearly every one I have met has asked me to be certain to see Smuts. He has grown to be the lion of the hour. . . . My expectations were unusually high; it was not alone what I had heard of him, but I have been impressed by his



speeches and statements which I have read from time to time. He has just returned from Italy. He spoke enthusiastically of the plan for the new Supreme War Council. This was valuable, for I have confidence in his opinion. He is one of the few men I have met in the Government who do not seem tired. He is alert, energetic, and forceful. . . .

‘The French Ambassador, M. Paul Cambon, came next. We had a long and interesting conversation.

‘M. Cambon began by saying that in his opinion it would be advisable for the four principal Powers, the United States, France, Great Britain, and Italy, to hold a preliminary meeting in Paris before the general conference, this meeting to be devoted exclusively to a discussion of the military plans of the Allies. The conference as originally planned was to have been merely a conversation, but after the idea became known to the Press the smaller nations asked to be represented and out of politeness their request was granted. M. Cambon feared that at the conference these smaller Powers would utilize the occasion to voice their political aspirations and thus obscure the main object of the conference, which was the successful prosecution of the war. No Russian delegate would probably be sent, but it was known to the Allies that Russia desired from the Allies a new declaration of the objects of the war; this M. Cambon thought quite unnecessary, as the object of the war was to beat Germany; all other objects could be discussed after that. . . .

‘M. Cambon then reviewed conditions in Great Britain, France, and Italy:

‘Great Britain could be relied upon to continue the war; she had suffered less than France, had not been invaded, and was ready to make greater sacrifices. . . .

‘The prospect of losing Venice (he thought it would be lost) would unite the nation [Italy] as nothing else could and consequently might turn out a blessing in disguise; the col-

lapse of the army was due to Italian Socialist propaganda acting in collusion with German agents.

‘In France there were elements in favor of a peace on any terms; these elements were composed principally of the minority group of the Socialist Party and of a small number of financiers whose operations were hampered by the continuation of the war; the bulk of the nation, however, especially the army and the peasants, would refuse to return to the *status quo* before war after losing two million men, not to speak of the destruction of property in the invaded territory. Any Government, M. Cambon said, that attempted to negotiate a peace of this kind could not stand for twenty-four hours.

‘In view of the fact that the French and British were sending eight divisions to Italy, no further progress on the Western Front could now be expected; he saw nothing else but for the populations of the Allied nations to wait patiently until the spring when the arrival of sufficient American troops would enable a victorious offensive to be made, which he thought would be successful before the autumn, as he had reason to believe that the Germans were running short not so much of foodstuffs but of raw material for the manufacture of munitions and artillery.<sup>1</sup> He terminated his remarks by saying that the nation which first asked for an armistice would be the defeated one; it had always been so in history.

‘Lord Bryce came next. He desired to get my opinion regarding a plan which he and his colleagues have submitted to the British Government suggesting the appointment of a commission to formulate plans for machinery to ensure peace after the war. I was sorry to tell him that the President felt it was best not to have a cut-and-dried agreement, but was in favor of a flexible understanding so that those concerned could get together and formulate plans to meet any emer-

<sup>1</sup> M. Cambon seems to have been the one responsible official willing to prophesy Allied victory in 1918.

gency. He admitted there was much to be said in favor of this. I asked him to submit his views in writing and I promised to discuss it with the President when I returned to Washington.

'*November 14, 1917*: . . . Lord French followed. He was exceedingly cordial and invited me to ask him any questions I desired. What I wished to know was his opinion of the proposed Supreme War Council. He was enthusiastic in his support of it and hoped I would recommend a United States representative for it.

'He spoke well of General Wilson and of the move to make him a member of the Supreme War Council. . . .

'My old friend, Sir William Tyrrell, was another caller. The British Government have given Tyrrell a task somewhat similar to the one I have undertaken for the United States; i.e., gathering data and preparing a case for the peace conference. Tyrrell has not lost his perspective. He has the same logical outlook as before the war. I can understand how deeply such a man regrets the madness of the hour and his impotence to stop it. . . .

'It is needless to go into the exchange of our views as to what the peace conference should do, because we were entirely of one mind. He looks upon it as I do — as a good opportunity which may be lost because of the grasping, selfish interests ever ready to use such occasions for their own and their country's aggrandizement. . . .

'I found Lansdowne <sup>1</sup> of a peculiarly pacific turn of mind. He condemned . . . the folly and madness of some of the British leaders. He thought it was time for the British to realize that in the settlement they need not expect to get what he termed 'twenty shillings to the pound.' He believes that definite war aims should be set out — aims that are moderate

<sup>1</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne, formerly British Foreign Secretary, who during the Balfour Ministry had negotiated the entente with France in 1904.



and that will appeal to moderate minds in all countries. He specifically set forth five or six things he thought necessary to be done and, strangely enough, Conservative that he is, we scarcely disagreed at all. [He advocated] a more liberal sea policy, bordering on the plan for the freedom of the seas, which indeed he was good enough to say he had obtained from me during my last visit here. He thought it would be necessary to give Germany an assurance as to our future economic policy which would not in any way restrict German trade. He was moderate in all his ideas. . . .

‘Lansdowne is a great gentleman . . . not merely in intellect and character, nor from having for a background an ancient and distinguished lineage, but in manner and in that intangible and indefinable air which comes as a gift from the Gods.

‘*November 16, 1917:* We dined with the Lord Chief Justice and Lady Reading. The other guests were the Prime Minister and Mrs. George, Sir William and Lady Wiseman. After the ladies left the table, the Prime Minister, Reading, Sir William, and I discussed the general situation. I desired to find what was in Lloyd George’s mind regarding peace terms. . . . I find it will be useless to try to get either the French or British to designate terms. Great Britain cannot meet the new Russian terms of ‘no indemnities and no aggression’ and neither can France. Great Britain at once would come in sharp conflict with her colonies and they might cease fighting, and France would have to relinquish her dream of Alsace and Lorraine. . . .

‘I determined not to push him further for a statement of peace terms, but concluded to wait until I return to Washington and advise the President to do it. We are not embarrassed by any desire for territory or commercial gain, therefore we are in a better position to outline peace terms than any of the other belligerents.

‘*November 18, 1917:* The First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir



Eric Geddes, conferred with me for an hour and a half. He has a fresh and vigorous personality. We went over naval matters in detail. . . . I was interested in what he had to say about the submarine situation. It happens they bagged four yesterday, perhaps two more. It is the biggest haul they have had in any one day since the war began. He explained how they were overcoming the menace; how many they had caught to date; how many submarines the Germans had; how many were in northern waters and how many in southern, and how many were in commission at one time.'

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, November 18, 1917

The following is short résumé of general political condition:

Russia: Kerensky and other more responsible officials urge Allies to make an offer of peace, basis no annexations or indemnities. They believe Germany would not accept and this would help to solidify Russia. They do not believe Germany would make separate peace with Russia owing to danger of socialistic infection, but they believe Germany will take Petrograd and near provinces in the spring. They claim this would suit German purposes better because demobilization of Russian army would produce anarchy and total stoppage of supplies.

The situation in Rumania is serious and they may be compelled to make a separate peace because of inability to get food from Russia.

The Italian situation at the present moment is better. If the line holds until the 26th there is a good chance that it may hold permanently. To-morrow will be rather an anxious day here, but I think nothing serious will happen.<sup>1</sup>

EDWARD HOUSE

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the parliamentary crisis.

‘November 19, 1917: . . . The Greek Prime Minister, Venizelos, followed. He came with the Greek Minister and his Military Attaché, Colonel Phrantzès. I had arranged for Crosby and Cravath to come to talk of the economic situation with Venizelos. When they came in I had gotten Venizelos to talking of the military situation and he was explaining what he thought the Allies should do. Crosby asked whether he had any assurance that the Allies would continue to hold Saloniki, stating that he had reasons for asking the question. . . . Venizelos replied that if the Allies did not hold Saloniki he might as well resign as Prime Minister, send for Constantine, and let the Germans take Greece. . . .

‘Then came Brailsford, who was followed by Spender, of the *Westminster Gazette*, who in turn was succeeded by Hirst, of the *Economist*, and Lord Loreburn. It was rather an afternoon with the Liberals. I explained the President’s position and mind upon pending questions. It is always a pleasure to confer with Loreburn, for our minds run nearly parallel. . . .

‘November 20, 1917: The Prime Minister and Lord Chief Justice took dinner with us. We had a long and intimate talk afterward. . . . I pinned George down to British war aims. What Great Britain desires are the African colonies, both East and West; an independent Arabia, under the suzerainty of Great Britain; Palestine to be given to the Zionists under British or, if desired by us, under American control; an independent Armenia and the internationalization of the Straits. . . .

‘I told George and Reading that in my opinion it was not altogether certain that Great Britain would not have done better without allies. If she had fought Germany alone, she would have accomplished just what she has now accomplished; that is, she would have held the seas, destroyed German commerce, and taken all the German colonies. Since it would have been impossible to have fought on land, Germany would have been compelled to have faced a battle at sea and

her fleet, in all probability, would have been destroyed. The cost to Great Britain of such a war would not have been one tenth the cost of the present war in which she has had to create and maintain an enormous army, and has had to finance her allies. She could not have reached conclusions with Germany, nor could Germany have reached conclusions with her, but she would have come out of it much the better of the two. However, if this had happened, the sympathy of the world might have been with Germany rather than with Great Britain because of the power Great Britain would have exercised upon the seas — a power which each nation might have thought would some day be directed against itself.

*'November 21, 1917:* The most interesting happening of my day was a visit to the Admiralty. Jellicoe showed me his war maps, charts, etc. . . . He explained the strategy of the war on the seas. He showed me where the new mine fields are being placed across the Straits of Dover. He also had a chart showing the convoy system. Each flotilla is noted and its exact position known each day. Jellicoe spoke highly of Benson, for whom I have a warm regard. It is Benson who has insisted upon their making a further attempt to close the Straits of Dover. . . .

*'Jellicoe endeavored to explain, without my questioning him, the matters which have been uppermost in American minds as to the prosecution of a more vigorous war. He convinced me that it was impossible to attack the submarine bases at present. . . .<sup>1</sup>*

*'I went from the Admiralty to No. 10 Downing Street, where the Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, and I conferred for an hour and a half. At the Cabinet meeting to-day they discussed two questions which they could not decide because they desired our opinion first. One was regarding Rumania*

<sup>1</sup> See Sims, *'How We Nearly Lost the War,' World's Work*, March, 1927.



and Russia. There is a strong element in the Cabinet who wish to recognize Kaledin, leader of the Cossacks in Southern Russia, by advising the Rumanians to coöperate with him. I thought at most they could not go further than to advise Rumania to coöperate with whatever Allied fighting forces were nearest them. I strongly urged not mentioning names. . . .

‘The other question which had arisen in the Cabinet, and which *all* of them seemed to favor, was that Great Britain should publicly declare that East Africa must never again be under German rule. The idea here was that if such a statement was made, the natives would join the British against Germany. They now fear Germany may sometime govern them again. It is said that the Germans mistreated the natives and they hate them, but they are afraid to take any action. The Cabinet thought that by making this statement, and by sending an expeditionary force of two divisions, they would settle the war in East Africa during the winter.

‘I also strongly advised against making this statement. I thought the moment inopportune and Great Britain would be placed in a false light. They asked if it would embarrass us in the United States. I thought it would. I counseled doing nothing at present, but to leave the matter open for future discussion. The military importance of it was not sufficient, I thought, to overcome the moral question involved. . . .

‘We then went into the question of war aims. Maps were brought and Mr. Balfour started in with his ideas of territorial division. . . . I thought what we agreed upon to-day might be utterly impossible to-morrow, and it seemed worse than useless to discuss territorial aims at this time. . . .

‘What I thought was necessary and pertinent at this time was the announcement of general war aims and the formation of an international association for the prevention of future wars.’



In the mean time the members of the American Mission were concluding their conferences on problems of coördination. 'They are working steadily,' wrote House to Wilson on November 9, 'and are doing more in a day than such bodies usually do in a week.' But there were many weeks' arrears to be made up, and although it was easy to exchange information, it proved difficult to decide economic policy, especially in view of the political and military crisis which naturally attracted the main energy of the War Cabinet. Minor questions could be settled, but the separate conferences were largely useless when it came to decisions upon major policies affecting several departments. 'Had the Supreme War Council been functioning,' wrote General Bliss, 'at the time of its arrival, the American Mission would have found its work easier. As it was, the members had to obtain their information piecemeal from various representatives of the different Governments, put it together and reconcile conflicting views as best they could.'<sup>1</sup> As House wrote on November 19, 'General Bliss is unable to give any satisfactory answers to the questions being put to him about the movement of our troops until he knows what shipping is to be set aside for American military purposes.' For the settlement of such large questions there was no machinery nor had any joint conference been devised. Nor had the Americans received the information they required as to the priority of Allied needs.

Notwithstanding the extent to which his attention had been caught by the parliamentary crisis, the Prime Minister agreed to push the work of coördination so that the British and Americans might be in complete understanding before the meeting of the interallied conference at Paris. Northcliffe and Reading, who had arrived from the United States, were entirely at one with House in believing that the main

<sup>1</sup> Bliss, *op. cit.*, 7.

purpose of the American Mission must not be forgotten because of the general military and political crisis.

‘*November 13, 1917:* [Conference with Lloyd George.] I emphasized the lack of coördination existing at present and urged that something be done at once to bring it about. George agreed to this, and to-morrow some action will be taken . . . in that direction.

‘Northcliffe has arrived from the United States and came at once to see me. He is pessimistic as to conditions here and optimistic over conditions in America. . . . Strangely enough Reading, just as he did the last time I saw them both in New York, followed Northcliffe. I saw him only a moment, but suggested that he help in every way possible to bring about a better coördination. Reading’s influence with Lloyd George is greater perhaps than any other man’s in England.

‘*November 15, 1917:* We now have both Reading and Northcliffe, Lloyd George’s closest friends, working to help the Prime Minister to coördinate the work we have in hand. Northcliffe delights in this. He is as eager as a hound on a trail.

‘Lloyd George is to preside at a meeting to be held at No. 10 Downing Street. It is to take place in the same room in which the British Cabinet declared war against the United States under the administration of Lord North.’

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *November 15, 1917*

After consultation it has been decided to postpone the Paris conference for another week. It is necessary to know whether Italy will stand or fall and to allow the French to form a new ministry and have a short time in office before we meet. Otherwise the conference would be futile.

I shall therefore remain here until towards the end of next week. . . .

The entire situation is critical.

EDWARD HOUSE

LONDON, *November 16, 1917*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Northcliffe has been splendid. . . . The Prime Minister has repeatedly offered him a seat in the Cabinet, which he has refused. He did not propose to relinquish the right to criticize when he thought it necessary. . . .

With this combination of Wiseman, Reading, and Northcliffe, things are now being accomplished with more rapidity than I have ever experienced here.

The Prime Minister came to see me yesterday to urge that I consent to a postponement of the Paris Conference. . . .

The postponement will not change our home-coming, which I have set for December 5th, 6th, or 7th from some port in France. I find that it would be impossible to do the things necessary and have the Commission finish their work before that date.

I cannot tell you how splendidly and cordially the Commission are working together, and what a fine impression they have made here.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Not the least of the aid which Northcliffe gave came from his newspapers, which published statements of Tardieu and of Northcliffe himself on conditions in the United States, in which they demanded 'swift improvement' in methods of managing the war, and emphasized the need of complete coöperation.'

'An Interallied organization . . . is indispensable,' wrote

Tardieu. 'When each of the Allied Governments sends its missions to ask the aid of Americans, the United States gains the impression that affairs in Europe are in chaos. There should be at once a Council of the Allies, which, with full knowledge of the situation after a careful study of all the circumstances, military and political, should transmit to the American Government *en bloc* the requirements of the various nations filtered, correlated, and justified in indisputable arguments, and proportioned to the capacity of production in the United States and the tonnage available for transport accommodation at sea. Then the United States, in full confidence of union among the Allies, can formulate its requirements for submission to Congress.'

Lord Northcliffe spoke with even greater frankness and vigor. He took the opportunity offered him by Lloyd George's request that he assume charge of the Air Ministry, to attack publicly what he regarded as aspects of inefficiency in British war administration, and to demand close co-operation with the efforts of America, the energy of which he praised warmly.

*Lord Northcliffe to Mr. Lloyd George*<sup>1</sup>

DEAR PRIME MINISTER:

... The spirit of the men and women of Great Britain is clearly as eager and splendid as ever. We have, in my belief, the most [efficient?] army in the world, led by one of the greatest Generals, and I am well aware of the fine achievements of many others of our soldiers, sailors, and statesmen, but I feel in the present circumstances I can do better work if I maintain my independence and am not gagged by a loyalty that I do not feel towards the whole of your administration.

<sup>1</sup> New York *Times*, November 16, 1917. [Cabled from London, November 15.]



I take this opportunity of thanking you and the War Cabinet for the handsome message of praise sent to me as representing the five hundred officials of the British War Mission to the United States, many of them volunteers and exiles. Their achievements and those of their ten thousand assistants deserve to be better known by their countrymen.

The fact that their work is not known is due to the absurd secrecy about the war which still is prevalent. Everything these officials are doing is known to our American friends, and, of course, to the Germans.

I trust I make no breach of confidence in saying that some of the documents which have passed through my hands as head of the Mission are such as, if published, would greatly increase our prestige in the United States and hearten our people at home.

May I also take this opportunity of giving warning about our relations with that great people from whom I come. We have had the tragedy of Russia, due partly to lack of Allied propaganda to counteract that of the Germans. We have had the tragedy of Italy, largely due to that same enemy propaganda. We have had the tragedies of Serbia, Rumania, and Montenegro. There is one tragedy which I am sure we shall not have, and that is the tragedy of the United States.

But from countless conversations with leading Americans I know that unless there is swift improvement in our methods here the United States will rightly take into its own hands the entire management of a great part of the war. It will not sacrifice its blood and treasure to the incompetent handling of the affairs of Europe.

In saying all this, which is very much on my mind, believe me, I have none but the most friendly feeling toward yourself and that I am greatly honored by your suggestion.

Yours sincerely

NORTHCLIFFE

The effort for greater vigor carried on by the Northcliffe Press combined with the dynamic leadership of Mr. Lloyd George led to the desired emphasis upon the economic problems, without the solution of which military success was impossible.

‘Now that the main outlines of an Allied Council are settled,’ said *The Times* on November 17, ‘the Cabinet are rightly giving first place to ensuring the success of the American Mission. The conversations between heads of departments are culminating in what in effect is a personal meeting of Governments. Colonel House, who for this purpose is himself virtually the Government of the United States, has had more than one discussion with the Prime Minister during the last two days, and his colleagues have hardly had a leisure moment. Unfortunate as it is in some respects that the visit of the Mission should coincide with political excitements both here and in Paris, there is now good reason for confidence that it will inaugurate a new and most hopeful chapter in the history of the war.’

On November 20 the joint conference of which House had written to the President was held between the technical members of the American Mission and the British War Cabinet. Colonel House was not present, possibly because he wished to emphasize by his absence the fact that it was primarily a meeting to consider technical problems. Admiral Benson spoke for the American Mission.

‘It is a very significant occasion,’ said Lloyd George in his welcome to the American delegates, ‘were it only for the place where the meeting takes place. I do not want to rake up the unpleasant past, a past especially unpleasant for us though not for you. It was in this room, I believe, that Lord North engineered some trouble for America, but a great deal

more trouble for himself. It is a great source of delight and satisfaction that in this very room where we committed a cardinal error, which has ever since been a lesson to us, a lesson which has borne fruit in the British Empire such as it is, that we should have representatives of your great country here to concert common action with us for the liberties of the world.

‘This is purely a business gathering. You have come over to this country to do business, and I have heard from inquiries I have made from various departments how hard you have been working during the few days you have been here to transact your business with the various departments with which you are concerned. . . . All the things which are wanted for the efficient conduct of the campaign are urgent, because, naturally, the sooner you are ready the sooner it will be over. But there are one or two things which are more urgent than others. After a good deal of consultation with my colleagues and our military and naval advisers, I should put man-power and shipping as the two first demands on your consideration.’<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lloyd George then proceeded, with all his genius for summarization, to lay bare the plight of the Allies, sparing nothing of the importance of the Italian defeat and the Russian Revolution, which made the necessity of American aid vital.

‘The Prime Minister frankly stated that the sooner the Republic can send over the largest number of troops the better. He was anxious, he said, to know how soon the first million could be expected in France. America has promised to launch 6,000,000 tons of shipping during the coming year. Here again time is of the essence of their usefulness. Our

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times Current History*, July, 1925. The entire *procès-verbal* of the Conference is there published.

shipping is practically all engaged in war work for ourselves and for our Allies. We cannot hope to have more available, even if the submarine danger does not grow worse, until the American programme begins to come into effect. Air service is another matter in which the Allies may safely count upon American help. We are also reluctantly compelled to rely very largely upon the United States and upon Canada to replenish our food supplies, and Mr. Lloyd George felt bound to assure his hearers that the "most drastic" restrictions on consumption "are about to be imposed" upon us all. On the other hand, he hopes that American assistance in tightening the blockade will enable us to make the enemy even more uncomfortable than they are.' <sup>1</sup>

At last America was learning what she sought, where and how she could aid most and earliest. As the leader in *The Times* next morning declared, there was not 'any question of America's determination to throw her full weight into the struggle which she has entered. . . . All she wants to know is just where this weight will tell most.' Men, ships, air planes, food, a strict embargo — such was the order in which the needs of the Allies were placed. The programme was still general, but the Americans now knew, as they had not known before, where the greatest urgency lay and just how serious was the crisis which had to be met.

Furthermore, at Rapallo an important step had been taken in the direction of general unity of action. If the new Supreme War Council could be strengthened at the approaching Paris conferences, an effective instrument of Allied victory would at last be developed.

<sup>1</sup> London *Times*, November 21, 1917.



## APPENDIX

## CREATION OF THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL

DECISIONS OF A CONFERENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
BRITISH, FRENCH, AND ITALIAN GOVERNMENTS

## I

The representatives of the British, French, and Italian Governments assembled at Rapallo on the 7th November, 1917, have agreed on the scheme for the organization of a Supreme War Council with a Permanent Military Representative from each Power, contained in the following paragraph.

## SCHEME OF ORGANIZATION OF A SUPREME WAR COUNCIL

## 11

(1) With a view to the better coördination of military action on the Western Front a Supreme War Council is created, composed of the Prime Minister and a Member of the Government of each of the Great Powers whose armies are fighting on that front. The extension of the scope of the Council to other fronts is reserved for discussion with the other Great Powers.

(2) The Supreme War Council has for its mission to watch over the general conduct of the war. . . .

(3) The General Staffs and Military Commands of the armies of each Power charged with the conduct of military operations remain responsible to their respective Governments.

(4) The general war plans drawn up by the competent military authorities are submitted to the Supreme War Council, which, under the high authority of the Governments, insures their concordance.

(5) Each Power delegates to the Supreme War Council one Permanent Military Representative whose exclusive function is to act as technical adviser to the Council.

(6) The Military Representatives receive from the Government and the competent military authorities of their country all the proposals, information, and documents relating to the conduct of the war.

(7) The Military Representatives watch day by day the situation of the forces, and of the means of all kinds of which the Allied armies and the enemy armies dispose.

(8) The Supreme War Council meets normally at Versailles, where the Permanent Military Representatives and their Staffs are established. . . .

## 111

The permanent Military Representatives will be as follows:

For France,	General Foch
For Great Britain,	General Wilson
For Italy,	General Cadorna

RAPALLO  
November 7, 1917

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL

Unity of control in the conduct of military operations in a given theatre is essential to success.

*General Bliss' Memorandum of November 25, 1917*

#### I

THE conversations between the American War Mission and the representatives of the British War Cabinet, held in the historic room in Downing Street on November 20, might be regarded, as an article in *The Observer* suggested, as 'the effective focus of the whole world-wide energies of the English-speaking peoples.' But they were merely preliminaries to the more important conversations of all the Allies that were arranged at the French capital. 'While we write the scene is changed to Paris. There, with the full participation of the United States, is being held an Allies' Conference by far the most thorough, momentous, which has yet taken place. . . . By disunity the Western Allies have thrown away chance after chance, but at last the stars have met in their favour.' <sup>1</sup>

The historian may raise the question whether the immediate specific results of the Paris conferences equaled this journalistic promise. But it is certain that Allied leaders had come to realize that closer coördination of effort was the single alternative to defeat. This realization marked the turning-point of the war; and if this month of November, 1917, might with some justice be called the darkest hour, it was not far from the dawn. Allied unity was not completed at this time either in the economic or military field. But much of the machinery was planned which ultimately achieved the necessary coördination.

<sup>1</sup> The London *Observer*, November 25, 1917.

Two main conferences were called, the one at Paris, the other at Versailles. The first was the general Interallied Conference, attendance at which was the original purpose of the House Mission. It was composed of representatives of all the Allies, who held their opening session on Thursday, November 29, in the Salon de l'Horloge of the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the Quai d'Orsay. It was the same room in which fourteen months later the plenary sessions of the Peace Conference were to be called. In the number and dignity of the delegates as well as in the mere formality of the two sessions, there was much to suggest the Peace Conference, although the later and more august assembly was never able to rival the severe brevity which characterized this gathering. The personnel was largely the same, for the Governments of the principal Powers were destined to last through the war, and the Peace Conference itself could hardly display a more distinguished list of delegates. Eighteen nations were represented, from Belgium to Siam, a galaxy of Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, Commanders-in-Chief and Chiefs of Staff, Admirals, Ambassadors, shipping experts, and food controllers.

As proved to be the case later at the Peace Conference, the plenary sessions of the Interallied Conference were chiefly decorative. The real work was accomplished at the small committee meetings of the experts, where the principles and mechanism of coöperation were outlined. According to Mr. Grasty, correspondent for the *New York Times*, an important contribution of the American delegates was their successful insistence that the Interallied Conference should not become a debating society for the great orators of the Allies, but should immediately resolve itself into a series of small workable and working committees.

The second of the general conferences was the Supreme War Council, which held its initial session at Versailles on December 1, representing France, Great Britain, Italy, and

the United States. If the purpose of the general Interallied Conference was primarily to provide coördination in matters of finance, supply, shipping, embargo, that of the Supreme War Council was to create an organization capable of co-ordinating military effort viewed in the light of general policy. Two questions had to be answered. The first concerned the composition and powers of the Council, which as outlined in the Rapallo Agreement were satisfactory neither to the Americans nor to the French, and were regarded with suspicion by an important group of British military experts. The second question concerned the war-plan for the approaching year. What steps should be taken to meet the threatened German offensive on the Western Front; how much effort should be expended in assistance to Italy and Greece; how much emphasis should be laid upon Allenby's operations against the Turks; what could be done to bring Russia back into the alliance?

## II

The American Mission crossed the Channel on November 22, and during the week that followed, even before the first formal session of the Interallied Conference, they went far toward settling with their French colleagues the bases of economic coördination. For Colonel House, the most important immediate problem was the settlement of the composition and functions of the Supreme War Council. He discovered as soon as he reached France that criticism of the Rapallo Agreement was acrid, and he feared lest the disagreement that threatened to develop between the French and British Governments should interfere materially with plans of coördination. House sympathized with the French demand for unified military control. At the same time he appreciated keenly the political difficulties of Mr. Lloyd George.

The British Prime Minister insisted that the Supreme War



Council must be under political control, since it was impossible to separate problems of general policy from those of military strategy; it was just this separation, he contended, which left the military forces under the control of commanders who had a national and not an Allied point of view, and which accounted for the waste and failures of the preceding years. Hence, according to the Rapallo Agreement, the Council was headed by the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, and the military representatives were subordinated to the political.

Mr. Lloyd George, moreover, insisted upon separating the Supreme War Council from the Chiefs of Staff, partly because of his unwillingness to appoint as military representative on the Council the British Chief of Staff, whom he regarded as largely responsible for the strategy which had cost the British army appalling losses in the two big battles of 1917. His choice was Sir Henry Wilson, whose 'remarkable natural gifts were not excelled in the British army; his experience was wide, his mind quick and resourceful, his courage conspicuous; especially he was an intimate friend of Foch and much trusted by the French Staff — a happy augury for the new coöperation. The Prime Minister and Sir William Robertson were men of incompatible temperaments, and their collaboration was perpetually hindered by mutual suspicion. Sir Henry Wilson, on the other hand, was a man whom Mr. Lloyd George understood and valued, for he had many qualities akin to his own — unflagging optimism for one thing, and a talent for explicit statement rare among tongue-tied soldiers.' <sup>1</sup>

It is not difficult to understand the factors that led Mr. Lloyd George to subordinate the military aspect of the Supreme War Council and to refuse to appoint to it the British Chief of Staff. But the French insisted that the Council as organized by the Rapallo Agreement did not

<sup>1</sup> Buchan, *A History of the Great War*, IV, 173.

provide for effective military coördination, since it left the Chiefs of Staff outside; and the position of the military advisers on the Council was anomalous, since they were divorced from their own staffs, subordinated to the political members, and deprived of any executive powers. The French would naturally have liked a single command to be exercised by a French general. But the British would not listen to such a suggestion. 'In all the conferences of that time,' wrote General Bliss, 'and up to the great disaster four months later, any suggestion as to a Commander-in-Chief only developed the belief that it was quite impossible.'<sup>1</sup>

If a generalissimo was out of the circle of practical possibilities for the moment, the Americans were none the less anxious to achieve virtual unity of military control. Neither General Pershing nor General Bliss, according to House's report, believed that this could be secured by the Rapallo plan unless it were amended.

*Colonel House to the President*

PARIS, November 23, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I foresee trouble in the workings of the Supreme War Council. There is a tremendous opposition in England to Lloyd George's appointment of General Wilson. Neither Sir William Robertson, Chief of Staff, nor Sir Douglas Haig have any confidence in him, and they and their friends look upon it as a move to put Wilson in supreme command.

The enemies of Lloyd George and the friends of Robertson

<sup>1</sup> *Foreign Affairs*, December 15, 1922, p. 9. The author of *Fragments d'histoire*, who is usually well-informed, states (*Le Commandement unique: Foch et les armées d'occident*, 188) that Colonel House asked definitely for the appointment of Marshal Joffre as generalissimo. It is certain that House did not conceal his personal preference for the single command; but it is equally certain that he realized the futility of demanding it at this time, and there is nothing in his papers to show that he ever suggested Joffre in this connection.

and Haig believe that George wants to rid himself of these generals and supersede them with Wilson. They claim that Wilson is not a great general, but is a politician and one that will be to George's liking.<sup>1</sup>

The French want a 'Generalissimo' but they want him to be a Frenchman. This, too, would meet with so much opposition in England that it is not to be thought of. Any Government that proposed it would be overthrown.

I have had long conferences with Bliss and Pershing on the subject, and I think they see the danger as I do. I am trying to suggest something else which will give unity of control by uniting all involved rather than creating dissension.

I have just had a conference alone with Clemenceau. Later without my saying a word upon the subject, he practically repeated the opinion that I have expressed to you above concerning the Supreme War Council. He is earnestly in favor of unity of plan and action, but he thinks as I do that the plan of Lloyd George is not workable, and for reasons somewhat similar to those I have given.

He has nothing in mind and says that he dares not formulate a plan because it might be looked upon with suspicion. He wants us to take the initiative and he promises that we can count upon him to back to a finish any reasonable suggestion that we make. . . .

He has put his time at my disposal and asks me to come

<sup>1</sup> House is merely reporting opinion. His own judgment of Sir Henry Wilson was, that of all the British officers he was best suited to serve as military representative on the council, both because of his ability and because of his cordial personal relations with the French.

House's letter to the President does not do justice to the point of view of Sir Henry Wilson, whose diaries indicate that both his and Mr. Lloyd George's plans were not based upon a desire to oust Sir William Robertson, but upon the conviction that only through an organization superior to the Chiefs of Staff could the war be won. How far this view should be regarded as correct is a matter upon which opinions differ and will probably continue to differ.



at my pleasure unannounced and says the door will always be open.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

General Bliss seems to have agreed with Mr. Lloyd George that the Rapallo plan was sound in so far as it left general supervision of the conduct of the war to the political leaders and was 'in accord with the military principle that war is but a continuation of political policy in a new form.'<sup>1</sup> But like General Pershing he was convinced that in a given theater of operations, such as the Western Front, unity of military control was essential to success and, in default of a generalissimo, that it could be achieved only through a purely military council with executive powers. The plan which he drafted with House and which they presented to the French thus eliminated the political members of the Supreme War Council and gave to the military members executive rather than merely advisory powers.

*Memorandum on Unity of Control*

PARIS, November 25, 1917

'1. Unity of control in the conduct of military operations in a given theater is essential to success.

'2. To ensure real efficiency, this unity of control must be effected through a purely military council, it being assumed that one or more of the principal Allied nations may be unwilling to place their military forces under a single Commander-in-Chief.

'3. It is believed that the Supreme War Council should be composed of the Commanders-in-Chief of the principal national forces in the field on the front over which the unity of control is necessary, together with the Chiefs of Staff of

<sup>1</sup> Bliss, in *Foreign Affairs*, December 15, 1922, p. 6.



those same national forces or officers designated by these Chiefs of Staff and representing them.

‘4. To ensure the prompt execution of the will of this Supreme War Council, there must be one man to carry this will into effect. This man must be the President of the Supreme War Council, chosen by the other members and having power to execute their will.’

We may ask whether, if this plan had been put into effect and if General Foch had been chosen as executive officer, the military disasters of 1918 might not have been avoided or lessened. It is interesting, at any rate, to note that the functions which General Foch was given in April, 1918, of ‘co-ordinating the action of the Allied armies on the Western Front,’ were almost exactly those which Bliss and House outlined in November for the President of the Supreme War Council.

A decade later General Bliss, writing at Washington on June 14, 1928, made the following comments on the memorandum which he and House presented to the French:

‘This was one of those “groping” memoranda, written when we were trying to feel our way through a very hazy matter, and doubtless would not have been written a little later.

‘The American Mission landed in England on November 7, 1917, — the day on which at Rapallo Messrs. Lloyd George, Painlevé and Orlando created the Supreme War Council. No one fully understood it, not even its creators. Military men, and most others who thought at all about it, believed that it would be a sort of Aulic Council, making and directing military plans, — in short, another step to disaster. Moreover, the French believed that it was a British scheme to get control of the French armies, and the British thought the same about the French. . . . Painlevé’s govern-



To Col. E. M. House from his friend and well-wisher  
 Parker H. Bliss

General, Chief of Staff, U. S. Army.

A Souvenir of our service together on the American Mission to  
 the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris, and on the Supreme War Council  
 at Versailles October 29 - December 18, 1917.



ment fell; Lloyd George said that his government was saved only by the adhesion, at the last moment of the British crisis, of President Wilson to the Agreement of Rapallo. I was influenced by the general military opinion. In my report to the President on December 17, 1917, I strongly urged that he make his adhesion to the Supreme War Council contingent on the appointment of an Allied Commander in chief, — I believing that with such an Allied commander the Supreme War Council would practically cease to operate. I did not then realize (and I don't think that any one else did) that the S.W.C. would not interfere in matters of military control but would only harmonize Allied governmental policies, which military commanders in the field could not do. None of us realized what the real functions of the S.W.C. were to be until the first important meeting in January. Until that time (at any rate, at the time of the attached memorandum) I was trying to find a way by which its possibilities for harm could be minimized. This appears in Par. 2 of the attached memorandum. My general idea in it was that *unless* the Allies could agree on a single commander in chief, the only thing was to compose the Council of the National commanders; let them agree on every operation in which two or more nations were to be expected to give mutual assistance, and then let one of them have power to execute their will. This was a way of "beating the devil around the stump"; for, evidently this man would, for all practical purposes of the particular campaign, be a commander in chief.'

The Americans understood, of course, that their proposal would encounter strong opposition. The British military leaders would naturally object to the executive powers of the President of the Supreme War Council, who would become practically Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies. The proposal also called for the inclusion in the Council of the Chiefs of Staff, to which Mr. Lloyd George was irrevocably



opposed. None the less it seemed worth while to put the scheme forward, especially since the contribution of the United States to Allied man-power was likely to be more important than any one had imagined. Both the British and French made it plain that without such contribution the military danger in the approaching spring would be serious. In London, General Bliss had discussed the matter with Sir William Robertson, and thus reported his conversation to Colonel House:

‘I showed him,’ said Bliss, ‘that by the month of May next, including troops now in France, we could, with the facilities now at our disposal transport not more than 525,000 men, including non-combatant forces; that without additional tonnage we could not supply even that number of men.... He expressed grave apprehension at this statement.

‘He told me that he doubted whether Italy could be held in the war during the coming winter; and that should she remain in it would require the presence of considerable troops from the English and French forces on the Western Front.... He said that the French man-power was going down.... He added that the Russian situation was such that the probability had to be faced at any moment for the withdrawal of perhaps thirty or forty German divisions from that front and transferring them to the Western Front.... The general impression left on my mind by his statement of the case was that a military crisis is to be apprehended if we cannot have in France next year by the end of spring a very much larger force than now seems possible.’<sup>1</sup>

In their interviews with Bliss and House, the French were

<sup>1</sup> ‘The British military men,’ wrote General Bliss on June 14, 1928, ‘insisted that the issue of the war would be determined in 1918 and that if America could not at least double the effort she hoped to make by the end of May, 1918, the Allied cause was lost.’

quite as pessimistic as Robertson and more specific. They insisted that an American army of a million would be necessary by the summer of 1918, although it would not be used except for defensive operations.

If the United States were to furnish such tremendous addition to Allied man-power, they could fairly ask for influence in determining the military organization of the Allies. Bliss and House were further encouraged by the attitude of Clemenceau and Pétain, who in the conference of November 25 gave general approval to the American scheme of a military executive council.

*Memorandum of Conversation of Colonel House and General Bliss with M. Clemenceau and General Pétain*

PARIS, November 25, 1917

‘... M. Clemenceau said that he would get straight to business and discuss the subject of the conference, to wit, the effective force of the French army in its relation to the arrival of American troops. He then requested General Pétain to make a general statement.

‘General Pétain began by saying that there are now 108 divisions of competent French troops at his disposition, including all troops on the immediate front and those which are held in reserve. He said that the French losses had been approximately 2,600,000 men, killed, died of wounds, permanently incapacitated, and prisoners. This is in addition to all men on the lines of communication and in the general service of the rear. Eight of these divisions, by about the beginning of the new year or soon thereafter, will have been transferred to northern Italy, leaving 100 for service in France. As these divisions are not more than eleven thousand men strong, each, this will give him a disposable force of not more than eleven hundred thousand men. He stated that the English have in France and Flanders sixty divisions,

which, as their divisions approximate twenty thousand men each, gives them a force of approximately twelve hundred thousand men.

‘He further stated that the English with this force of twelve hundred thousand men are occupying a front of about 150 kilometers, and M. Clemenceau then added that the French with their eleven hundred thousand men were occupying about 500 kilometers.

‘General Pétain estimated that on the German front there was an equal number of troops, but that there were no means of determining with accuracy how many disposable men the latter had in the rear. He thought it possible that the Germans might be able to transfer from the Russian front as many as 40 divisions if they were not held there by active operations on the part of the Russians and Rumanians. . . .

‘General Pétain, in reply to the question as to how many American troops he desired to have available at a fixed date, replied that as many as possible should be there as early as possible, but that they must be soldiers and not merely men. It being explained to him how desirable it was that we should have an approximate definite number by a fixed date in order to make our negotiations with those who must provide the necessary tonnage, he stated that we must have a million men available for the early campaign of 1919, with another million ready to replace and reënforce them. Asked how many we should have in France for a campaign in 1918, he said that this was answered by fixing the number for the campaign of 1919, since in order to have this number for the latter campaign they would have to arrive at a fixed rate from this moment and extending throughout the year 1918; the number that would thus have arrived at any fixed date in the year 1918 was all that he would ask for that date. He explained that for the campaign of 1918 he would utilize the American troops in holding those parts of the line on which he would not make an offensive, thus relieving the French



troops now there and making the latter available for an offensive elsewhere. In order to carry out this plan, he stated that we should move troops to France at the rate of two divisions complete per month with corresponding service of the rear troops, until about the first of May, when the rate should be increased to three divisions a month and continue thus through the calendar year.

‘It will be noted that at this rate, including the four divisions now in France, there would be there at the end of the year a total of thirty divisions. Since the American division as now organized consists of 27,000 men, these thirty divisions should be equivalent to seventy-three French divisions of 11,000 each.

‘The discussion of this subject having terminated, Mr. House then asked the question as to how far M. Clemenceau and General Pétain accepted the organization and functions of a Supreme War Council as proposed by Mr. Lloyd George. In reply, both of them expressed non-concurrence in it. General Pétain strongly expressed the view that the Council must have executive power and the right to exercise this power promptly. He did not think that this power existed or could be exercised in a council formed as proposed by Mr. Lloyd George. Asked by Mr. House as to whether a workable Supreme War Council could be formed and composed of the Commanders-in-Chief of the armies on the Western Front, together with the Chiefs of Staff of those armies, the latter constituting a Committee on Strategy, he replied that this could be done were it not for the fact that there would be still no one person to carry into execution the will of this military council. Being asked by General Bliss whether this executive official might not be the President of the Council, to be chosen by the members thereof and with power only to carry into execution the will of the Council, he replied that this could be done and being done such an arrangement would have his approval. He stated, however, that while, in



planning an offensive a considerable time beforehand, there would be time for careful consideration and expression of the will of the Council, there might be emergencies requiring such prompt action that this executive officer could not be expected to do more than quickly consult the other members and then give very prompt orders.

‘Being asked whether M. Clemenceau and General Pétain gave their approval of this general plan with the distinct understanding that it eliminated the Prime Ministers and other political representation of the various Allied countries, they both stated that it was so understood by them. . . .’

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, November 26, 1917

The conference with Clemenceau and Pétain yesterday resulted in a clear understanding as to the military situation. They gave us information about the number of fighting men left in France and what would be necessary from us. If we send over a million actual fighting men by the autumn of 1918, they will continue to use their men for offensive operations and use ours for defensive purposes until then.

Pétain believes that whatever Supreme War Council is created should have a president or executive officer to execute its decisions. This is sure to meet with English opposition. What is your opinion of it? The English arrive to-morrow night, and on Wednesday Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and I will have a conference.

EDWARD HOUSE

President Wilson’s reply to Colonel House’s request for instructions as to what plan he should advocate was general and left the matter to House’s discretion. The President cabled that after a conference with Secretary Baker he thought it best to say that he favored ‘the most effec-

tive methods obtainable' whether directed by one man or not.<sup>1</sup>

On November 27 the British representatives arrived in Paris. Colonel House immediately arranged for an interview with Mr. Lloyd George and set himself for the effort to persuade him to accept the American plan for a military council with an executive officer. The British Prime Minister was cordial, but he did not conceal the difficulties which stood in the way of his approval. Not the least of these difficulties was the strong sentiment in Great Britain against putting British troops under the control of a foreign commander, which would have been the practical effect of the American suggestion. House finally agreed that if the Council could be made purely military in composition and left with executive powers, it would not be essential to include the Chiefs of Staff. 'It would be better to have the Chiefs of Staff,' wrote House, 'but since he is so thoroughly committed to Wilson and since the appointment of Wilson will mean Lloyd George's trouble and not ours, no one should complain.' The Prime Minister admitted that his chief objection to the American plan arose from its inclusion of the Chiefs of Staff and he promised to consider the compromise. But the next morning he decided that he could accept no change in the Rapallo Agreement. It was essential, he felt, that the Supreme War Council should be under political control, and if the Chiefs of Staff were excluded it would be useless and confusing to give executive powers to the military members.

An extract from the diary of Sir Henry Wilson, who came over from London with Mr. Lloyd George, indicates that the Prime Minister was convinced that the Rapallo plan was the only feasible one and that if that fell through there would be no Supreme War Council.

'Lloyd George is angry,' wrote Sir Henry on November 27,

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, December 1, 1917.

‘and says that he will have a row with Clemenceau to-morrow, and if Clemenceau does not give in he [Lloyd George] will go straight back to London. Lloyd George certainly must show his teeth. It is intolerable if arrangements come to at Rapallo one week can be upset the next.

‘Lloyd George realizes perfectly that his own future rests on the success of the Supreme Council, and he also is clear in his mind that unless we have it we shall lose the war. Clemenceau will give in to-morrow. He is in no position to quarrel with Lloyd George.’<sup>1</sup>

Thus, early in the morning of November 28 the British Prime Minister told House that he could agree to no change in the Rapallo Agreement, that the Chiefs of Staff must be excluded and the political complexion of the Council emphasized. He asked House to tell Clemenceau that, unless the French accepted the Rapallo Agreement as binding, there was nothing for him to do but return to London.

Colonel House wrote as follows of his conference with Clemenceau:

‘I was with the French Prime Minister at half-past nine. . . . Clemenceau agreed to yield to Lloyd George as to the Chiefs of Staff, but said with a sardonic smile, “It vitiates the entire plan. What I shall do is to put on a second or third rate man instead of Foch, and let the thing drift where it will.” . . .

‘I remarked that it was hard enough to fight the Germans and we had best not begin fighting among ourselves, and if Lloyd George insisted upon such a Supreme War Council as had been suggested . . . we would have to yield because of his difficulties at home. The differences between George, Robertson, and Haig make it impossible to carry out the general desire for complete unity of military action.

<sup>1</sup> Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, II, 32.



‘I convinced Clemenceau that we had better, for the moment, . . . not do anything to aggravate the situation for him [Lloyd George].’

Thus the composition of the Supreme War Council and its functions were settled according to the Lloyd George formula, and the military representatives on the Council remained simply advisers to the main political body. In his memoirs, M. Painlevé intimates that had he remained in power the military committee would have formed an actual interallied staff, which would have been headed by General Foch in command of the Franco-British reserves, a plan which was attempted the following February.<sup>1</sup> But the papers of Colonel House, as quoted above, indicate clearly that, given the difficult situation in which Mr. Lloyd George found himself, no further step toward unification of interallied control could have been taken at this time. It is hardly likely that where M. Clemenceau and Colonel House failed to alter the British attitude, M. Painlevé could have succeeded.<sup>2</sup>

The military committee, at all events, was a strong one, for Clemenceau appointed not the ‘second or third rate man’ he had threatened, but Foch’s Chief of Staff, General Weygand, who was proved in France and later in Poland to possess strategic qualities of the highest order. Great Britain was represented by Sir Henry Wilson, as Mr. Lloyd George planned, until February when, following Sir William Robert-

<sup>1</sup> *Comment j’ai nommé Foch et Pétain*, 290.

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Robertson believes (*Soldiers and Statesmen*, I, 221) that ‘the real attitude of Mr. Lloyd George differed considerably from the account which M. Painlevé gives of it.’ That account, which presents the British Prime Minister as entirely in accord with Painlevé’s desire to give General Foch virtual control at this time, is quite inconsistent with the impressions of Colonel House. It should be observed that just as soon as Mr. Lloyd George judged the political situation to be ripe for the proposal, January 30, 1918, he himself advocated granting executive powers to the military representatives under the presidency of General Foch and giving to them control of the general reserve of thirty divisions.



son's resignation, he became Chief of Staff. Italy was represented by Cadorna, who had the advantage of having commanded the Italian army and the disadvantage of having lost much of it. The United States was represented by General Bliss. Although deprived of the opportunity to coördinate strategy on the Allied fronts, the military committee collected at Versailles a mass of information and elaborated certain plans which ultimately proved of the utmost assistance to General Foch as Commander-in-Chief.

### III

In the mean time preparations were made for convening the Interallied Conference, the importance of which was emphasized by the Allied Press in rather extravagant phrases. Colonel House regarded the plenary session, to which delegates of all the Powers at war with Germany were invited, with a mixture of indifference and apprehension. The actual work of coördination had been and would be accomplished by the technical experts in their committee meetings, and not by the chiefs of state in solemn conclave. There was some danger, perhaps, that the plenary session would provoke time-consuming debate on the more delicate topics which, if discussed in public, would tend to divide rather than to unite the Allies.

*'November 27, 1917:* Following some remarks we had on the subject, Clemenceau told a mutual friend that he had about decided to open the Conference with not more than three sentences. He will virtually say: "Gentlemen, we are at war, let us proceed to work." I sent word to him that this would be the most dramatic incident of the Conference, and I hoped he would hold to his intention. . . .

'I said to Lloyd George that Clemenceau would probably make a speech of not more than two or three sentences in opening the Conference and perhaps he [Lloyd George]

would offer a resolution that speeches be dispensed with, that committees be appointed, and the Conference get down to immediate business. . . . He saw the danger of having speeches made at the Conference. If they are made, the Russian question will be ventilated and many indiscreet things said which might make the Conference an instrument for evil rather than good. We should get down to work at once, having already agreed upon the committees to be appointed.

‘*November 28, 1917: [Conference with Clemenceau.]* I asked about the Interallied Conference. Clemenceau’s face twisted into a curious smile and he shrugged his shoulders. We are both of the opinion that it is useless to call all the experts and delegates who are here into a general meeting. . . .

‘I do not wish it to be understood that I do not approve the general purpose for which this Conference is called, for the war can be won only by a coördination of all the Allied resources. What Clemenceau objects to is the spectacular manner in which it was called. All the men on our Mission, and those on the other Allied Missions, could have met quietly and coördinated the work to be done without such a meeting as is planned, and which will be filled with political leaders bent upon airing their opinions. . . .

‘Clemenceau telephoned Pichon <sup>1</sup> that I was on the way and said any understanding we reached he would abide by.

‘Pichon thought it would be best to invite every one in at the beginning and then segregate the members of the Conference into sections or committees, and to keep down general discussion in order to prevent friction. He agreed, too, to let all the Allied Ambassadors, all the French Cabinet, and practically every one else who desired to sit in, do so. . . .

‘Went to the Foreign Office at six o’clock. Lloyd George, Balfour, Orlando, Sonnino, Clemenceau, and Pichon were

<sup>1</sup> Stéphane Pichon, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

present at the meeting. We discussed the procedure for to-morrow's conference. . . .

'Pichon thought committees could be formed by to-morrow afternoon. I replied that our members on the committees could be selected within ten minutes after we returned to the hotel.

'I took Balfour back to the Crillon, and he put Sir Eric Drummond in touch with Gordon, and in a few minutes he and Drummond had the committees arranged.'

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, November 28, 1917

I am having frequent conferences with the French and English Prime Ministers and we are reaching conclusions upon many matters.

The Conference itself to-morrow will not be important, for there will be representatives of all Allied Powers and the discussions must necessarily be of a general and not very intimate character. Such a large conference was a mistake and has many elements of danger. Our main endeavor now is to get through with it without any mishap.

The Supreme War Council will probably meet at Versailles on Saturday. That, too, has been largely divested of its power for service by Lloyd George's insistence that General Wilson shall sit on it instead of the Chiefs of Staff and commanders in the field, as Clemenceau, Pétain, Bliss, and I had agreed. This is because of his disagreement with Robertson and Haig. I suppose that he does not feel strong enough to depose them and is therefore using the Supreme War Council idea to supplant them in another way.

EDWARD HOUSE

'November 29, 1917: The Interallied Conference took place this morning at ten o'clock at the Foreign Office. It went

absolutely as scheduled. It was an imposing gathering. The Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, Ambassadors, Army Chiefs of Staff, Navy heads, etc., etc., of the Allied forces were brought together in one place for the first time. . . .

‘After Clemenceau had read a short address of a few lines, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs made exactly the speech we agreed upon yesterday, and the Conference immediately adjourned and the different sections went into executive session. It was dramatic and unusual. . . . I feel sure there has never been a conference of such importance with so little said and which was so promptly closed. I have never seen a more surprised set of delegates. Even the British were but partially aware of how drastic the curtailment of speech was to be. It was exactly eight minutes from the time Clemenceau rapped the Conference to order until it was adjourned.’

Clemenceau’s speech was indeed a model of brevity.

‘In this, the greatest of all wars,’ he said, ‘we are brought together by the sentiment of supreme solidarity in order to achieve upon the battlefield the right to a peace truly worthy of mankind.’

‘In this splendid gathering of hopes, duties, and determination, we are accordingly ready for every sacrifice which may be demanded by an alliance that can never be broken by intrigue nor weakness.’

‘The noble spirit which animates us must be translated into action. The order of the day is work. Let us get to work.’

#### IV

During the days that preceded and followed the opening session of the Interallied Conference, while the experts of the War Mission were engaged in their technical committee



work, Colonel House was busied with a multitude of conversations, some personal, some political, all of them calculated to give him information for the use of the President. 'A perfect whirlpool,' he wrote on November 30. 'Constant conferences with Lloyd George, Balfour, the two Japanese Ambassadors, Baron Chinda of London and his confrère here [Matsui], General Pershing, Horodyski, Shulski, the Liberian Minister, General Bliss, Admiral Benson, and the different members of the Mission.' He discussed with Joseph Willard, Ambassador to Spain, the peace feelers which Germans were sending through Madrid. With Tardieu and Clementel he talked over the plans to threaten Germany with an economic embargo after the war as a means of bringing her to reasonable terms.<sup>1</sup> He listened to General Foch's report on the military situation. 'He has just returned from Italy and tells me that the Italian line will hold where it is now until spring. He said: "It is again glued together."'

With Clemenceau, Pétain, and Pershing, Colonel House talked over the conditions under which the American troops in France could bring the most useful assistance. House recognized immediately the ability of the French Prime Minister.

'I may change my mind before I leave Paris, but it seems to me now that Clemenceau is one of the ablest men I have met in Europe, not only on this trip but on any of the others. There can be no doubt of his great courage and his unusual ability. . . . He said if the Americans do not permit the French to teach them, the Germans will do so at great cost

<sup>1</sup> 'They were surprised to learn,' wrote House, 'that I had already discussed this question with the President and had suggested the same procedure some weeks ago, and that it was probable the President would mention it in his forthcoming address to Congress.' On December 4, Mr. Wilson included in his Message the following sentence: 'It might be impossible, also, in such untoward circumstances, to admit Germany to the free economic intercourse which must inevitably spring out of the other partnerships of a real peace.'

of life. . . . General Pétain spoke frankly about the American army in France. He thought that the troops should go into the French army in companies and battalions and receive their training in that way. He had made a memorandum of subjects he wished to discuss with me. . . .<sup>1</sup>

‘Pershing discussed the French and British desire to have our troops go into their ranks for training. He thought the situation might require it, but he was of the opinion that if the American troops went in, very few of them would ever come out, and that it would be foolish to expect to build up a great American army by that method. He was very fair and open-minded about this.’

In the mean time Admiral Benson had reached at least tentative conclusions as to the part that should be played by the United States Navy during the coming spring. It was agreed that the plan for attacking the German fortified ports, ‘destroying the hornets’ nest,’ as Mr. Wilson had called it, was not feasible, although the more westerly submarine bases, such as Ostend and Zeebrugge, might be raided. The American suggestion for a mine barrage in the North Sea was approved. What the Allies most ardently desired was the greatest possible number of destroyers for convoy duty, since upon the safe transportation of a large American army would depend all the military plans for 1918.

v

All these discussions Colonel House evidently hoped would be crystallized into a definite plan at the session of the Supreme War Council which was opened at Versailles on December 1, under the presidency of M. Clemenceau.

‘At 9.45 General Bliss and I,’ wrote House, ‘started for Versailles. The Supreme War Council was held in the

<sup>1</sup> The Pétain Memorandum is printed in the appendix to this chapter.

Trianon Palace Hotel, and Clemenceau and Orlando were already there when we arrived. Clemenceau and I went upstairs for a conference and to outline a programme before the Council convened. Before Lloyd George came, Clemenceau showed considerable excitement concerning the relative lengths of the British and French lines on the front, declaring that an adjustment must be made and that he would not permit the British to evade the issue. He said he would resign from the French Ministry if an adjustment satisfactory to France was not made.<sup>1</sup> At that point Lloyd George came in and the three of us agreed upon a programme.

‘First, we discussed the length of the lines which France and Great Britain were to hold on the Western Front. I did not commit myself on this, stating it was a matter for them to determine among themselves, since the United States as yet had no line.’<sup>2</sup>

‘We next discussed Italy and our war policy there. Then came Greece, and later, Rumania.

‘After this private conference was finished, we descended to the larger conference room. . . .

‘General Bliss and I agreed not to take any positive position, but to listen and get information. We feel that it is not in good taste to do more at this time, since we have no men on the firing line. When our army is here in numbers, then it will be another story. Questions of general policy, finance, munitions, and all economic problems we feel at liberty to take an active part in, but as to military plans,

<sup>1</sup> According to Sir Henry Wilson’s diary, M. Clemenceau some days later told him that unless the British took over to Berry-au-Bac he would resign. ‘The old man was difficult,’ wrote Wilson. ‘He raged against the English, and then fastened on Haig and in a minor degree Robertson.’ Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson*, II, 41.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion continued through the winter. Clemenceau and Foch desired the British to extend their front to Berry-au-Bac. Pétain was content with Barisis on the left bank of the Oise, to which village General Gough’s Fifth Army took over during January.



other than naval, it seems best to remain in the background and listen.'

The French Prime Minister opened the session with a speech, the substance of which was much more in accord with the particular ideas of Mr. Lloyd George than those of M. Clemenceau. According to the plan outlined, each Government should secure the opinions of its own General Staff and transmit them without delay to the permanent military advisers of the Council, who after studying the military situation as a whole should make recommendations as to the military operations to be undertaken in 1918. He drew special attention to the situation in Russia, in Italy, and in the Balkans, to the prospective coöperation of the American forces, to the question of tonnage and shipbuilding and their effect upon man-power available for the armies. He reminded the military advisers not to lose sight of the fact that the war had become largely one of exhaustion and that even if Russia had succumbed, at any rate for the present, both Turkey and Austria were not far from a collapse. Then came an allusion to the favorite strategical plan of Lloyd George. M. Clemenceau suggested that perhaps Prussian militarism could best be overcome by first crushing Germany's allies, and reserving the crushing of Germany herself for a culminating effort when the whole of the Allied forces could be concentrated against her. He also emphasized the international character of the military committee of the Council, reminding the military advisers that their task was to study the problem before them from the point of view of the Allies as a whole and not as representatives of separate countries and to submit their recommendations in a collective form.

To such an extent the creation of the Supreme War Council was a step, although a hesitating step, towards unity of military purpose. At least one definite achievement of value was secured when the Council proceeded to pass a series of



resolutions, according to which the separate Governments agreed to furnish the military advisers with full information of a general political and departmental character; the resolutions provided also that the General Staffs and the Ministries of War, the Ministries of Marine and Shipping, the Foreign Offices, the Departments of Munitions, Aviation, Finance, and the like, of the separate Governments should furnish all information that might aid the studies of the military advisers of the Supreme War Council. Thus if the new body did not result in immediate unity of military control, it at least provided for the centralizing and correlating of information.

The remainder of the session was taken up with a rather desultory discussion, regarding the amount of assistance needed by Italy, and the situation at Saloniki, of which, said Clemenceau, 'we know very little, or at any rate what we do know is not very favorable.' M. Venizelos entered to explain the situation in Greece, and, giving the delegates rather a lengthy historical exposition as to background, was brought to realities by Sir William Robertson's terse question: 'How many divisions can you give us?' It was agreed that Greece had not received the assistance she might have expected (Lloyd George spoke of the 'unintelligence' of the treatment meted out to her), and a resolution was passed promising study of the Balkan military situation and advances of food, military equipment, and money. 'I hope,' said Lloyd George to M. Venizelos, 'that you will go back to Greece with a good heart.'

Altogether the Supreme War Council at this session passed eight resolutions, of which four concerned the securing of information for the military advisers, the others providing for investigation of the military problems connected with the Italian, Belgian, and Balkan fronts.<sup>1</sup> It was obviously necessary that such investigation should be made before recom-

<sup>1</sup> Text of resolutions is given in the appendix to this chapter.

mendations for action could be drafted. Nevertheless Colonel House could not escape a sense of disappointment that Allied conferences seemed to result in academic study rather than definite plans.

*'December 1, 1917: While a good many subjects were brought before the Conference, not one, I think, was brought to a conclusion. I can understand quite readily why Germany has been able to withstand the Allies so successfully. She has no superior ability, but she has superior organization and method. Nothing is buttoned up with the Allies; it is all talk and no concerted action. The changes of Government are partly responsible, but lack of coördination and decision are the chief obstacles. . . .*

*'Clemenceau, Pétain, and Bliss did more in our conference of last week than was done at the Supreme War Council, for we at least determined how many American soldiers should come to France, when they should come, and how to get them here. We also planned a real Military War Council. . . .*

*'Lloyd George and Reading dined alone with me. We had a pleasant evening together. They were both in good form and George was happy over the conclusion of the Conference. Just why he was happy, excepting that the Conference had adjourned and he was returning to England, is more than I can fathom, for certainly we have not done one half of what should have been done. The Supreme War Council has taken up but few of the matters which properly should have come before it, and instead of sitting for one morning it should have sat for a week.'*

## VI

The Allied Governments were careful to picture the Paris Conference as strictly a war council, and the various suggestions that emanated from irresponsible pacifists were sedulously quashed. In this President Wilson was thoroughly in

accord with the European Allies. Now that the United States had entered the war there was no one who took a stronger stand than he against an inconclusive peace which would leave Germany's imperial power intact. In a speech at Buffalo, shortly after the departure of the House Mission, he made plain his conviction that the only way to end the war was to defeat Germany.

‘What I am opposed to,’ said Wilson, ‘is not the feeling of the pacifists, but their stupidity. My heart is with them, but my mind has a contempt for them. I want peace, but I know how to get it and they do not. You will notice that I sent a friend of mine, Colonel House, to Europe, who is as great a lover of peace as any man in the world, but I didn't send him on a peace mission yet. I sent him to take part in a conference as to how the war was to be won, and he knows, as I know, that that is the way to get peace if you want it for more than a few minutes.’

Nevertheless the question of peace negotiations was raised at Paris, and, as always, revolved around the possibility of detaching Austria from the German alliance. Ever since the peace proposal of the Pope, in August, there had been talk of secret peace negotiations, none of which, however, had been taken very seriously by the Allied Governments. A note of the British Ambassador at the Vatican, to the effect that Great Britain could not answer the Pope's proposal until Germany made clear her intentions with regard to Belgium, was understood in Germany to represent a tentative offer. Germany proceeded to lay down conditions, which were transmitted to the Spanish Minister in Belgium and from Madrid were passed on to London. Mr. Balfour had immediately cabled to Colonel House the sense of the proposal and asked him to obtain the President's opinion as to how it should be treated. Mr. Wilson approved a cable



which House had drafted for Balfour, to the effect that the British could not discuss the matter without consulting the other Allies, and 'as so many insincere efforts for peace have already been put out semi-officially, you could not even consult your co-belligerents until a more definite proposal is made.'<sup>1</sup> A reply in this sense, after being approved by the Allied Ambassadors in London, was returned and the affair languished.

At the same time Germany was endeavoring to initiate secret negotiations through Baron Lancken, German High Civil Commissioner in Belgium, who made the suggestion that he hold conversations with no less a person than Aristide Briand, former Prime Minister. Briand was personally convinced that the overtures proceeded from a responsible source, probably from the Kaiser, and he told the French Government that he would be willing to attempt the mission. He made it plain to the agent bringing the suggestion from Lancken that no Frenchman would even think of undertaking conversations without an agreement among all the Allies and without knowing definitely that Germany was entirely disposed to concede Alsace-Lorraine to France; he had received the intimation within a fortnight that Germany thus understood the conditions of discussion.

In a letter to Ribot, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Briand laid the apparent willingness of Germany to make broad concessions before the French Government; he was himself so far convinced of German anxiety for peace that he offered to undertake unofficial negotiations which would not bind the Government, but which would determine definitely whether this was a serious proposition or a trap. Ribot, however, was suspicious, and the representatives of the other Allies, as well as Mr. Lansing, to whom the sense of Briand's

<sup>1</sup> Balfour to House, October 5, 1917; House to Wilson, October 5, 1917; Wilson to House, October 7, 1917. Reference is made to the proposal in *The Ordeal of a Diplomat*. 167-68, by Nabokoff, Russian Chargé in London.



letter was communicated, declined to follow the matter up.<sup>1</sup>

In the mean time negotiations had been in progress between an Austrian and a French representative of the General Staff, which the Allied politicians watched with rather more interest; they hoped for the possibility of a separate peace with Austria, however firm they might be in their determination to make no peace with an unbeaten Germany. These Armand-Revertera negotiations had been begun during the summer, and were still in progress when the Clemenceau Ministry came into power. The new Premier told Armand to 'listen but to say nothing.' The Italians were naturally opposed to any conversations with Austria, for it was at the expense of Austria that they hoped to fulfill their war aims.

To Lloyd George the thought of detaching Austria was always attractive, and he seized the opportunity offered by the informal conferences at Paris to broach it to his colleagues. Colonel House indicated mild approval, although he was not enthusiastic. He was ever willing to investigate any method which might end the war, provided it did not leave German militarism in political control and made possible the establishment of an international organization capable of maintaining a just settlement. He agreed with Briand that it was a mistake not to have gone more thoroughly into the Lancken proposals. He did not have much confidence, however, in the plan of separating Austria from Germany, and he was beginning to approach the view he later held firmly, that a solid peace could not be made so long as the Hapsburg Empire remained.

'November 29, 1917: After lunch, Lloyd George asked to see me again. He proposed that we should find out what Austria's peace terms are. Austria has made several ad-

<sup>1</sup> Ribot, *Lettres à un ami. Souvenirs de ma vie politique*, 289-97.

vances to the British, who have insisted that the terms be put in writing. George asked if I would back him if he insisted that this latest offer of Austria should be probed. I cheerfully acquiesced. . . . A conference was held in Pichon's room with Clemenceau, Pichon, de Margerie, representing France; Lloyd George, Balfour, and Addison representing Great Britain; Orlando and Sonnino representing Italy. . . .

'George precipitated the discussion by making a vehement argument in favor of investigating the Austrian peace feeler. Sonnino at once resented this and, for a moment, it looked as if there would be a first-class row. I backed Lloyd George as I had promised. . . . We finally got Sonnino and Orlando to consent to the proposal.

'We were in conference for something like two hours and a half. . . . George made an able argument, every word of which I endorsed, but it was done too precipitately. If we had first seen Clemenceau and gotten him in line, and then talked with Sonnino alone, the matter could have been settled in a few minutes and without causing any feeling. At one time it looked as if the Latins would line up against the Anglo-Saxons, but finally Clemenceau came over on our side and Sonnino and Orlando succumbed.'

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, November 30, 1917

Yesterday afternoon at a conference of the Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries of England, France, and Italy in which I sat, England was authorized to instruct her representatives in Switzerland to ascertain what terms Austria had to offer for a separate peace, which she has indicated a desire to make. . . .

This action was taken because of the probability of Russia soon making a separate peace.

EDWARD HOUSE

'December 1, 1917: Lloyd George and I walked together from the Foreign Office to the Hotel de Crillon. He was full of the proposed peace with Austria. . . .

'After dinner we [House, Lloyd George, and Reading] took up the question of Reading going to Switzerland to meet a representative of the Austrian Government to discuss the making of peace with Austria. . . . Reading thought it would not do for him to go because every one would wonder what the Lord Chief Justice of England was doing in Switzerland. . . .'

All plans for peace negotiations with Austria were doomed to failure, regardless of the ability of the negotiators. Instead of Lord Reading, General Smuts was sent to Switzerland, where he met the former Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Great Britain, Count Mensdorff. Their conversations were quite inconclusive. The Austrian Government was sincerely anxious for peace; the Dual Monarchy had nothing to gain and everything to lose by the prolongation of the war. But it sought a general peace including Germany; it was unable even if it had been willing to separate its fortunes from those of the German Empire. Austria was equally unprepared for the sacrifices which the Allies, especially Italy, demanded. Negotiations in one form or another continued into the following spring, but at no time did they indicate a serious chance of a successful outcome.<sup>1</sup>

## VII

Equally abortive was the effort made by Colonel House to persuade the European Allies to issue a joint statement of war aims, which would weaken German propaganda and help the Allies to maintain friendly relations with Russia. Such a step, he maintained, was the more necessary because of the Bolshevik peace proposals and the increasing demand on the

<sup>1</sup> See below, Chapter XII.



part of liberal and labor elements in Allied countries for an assurance that the war was not being continued for imperialistic ends. The letter of Lord Lansdowne to the *Daily Telegraph*, published on November 29, summarized this feeling.<sup>1</sup>

On December 3, Colonel House had a long conversation with Aristide Briand, in which the French statesman developed the thesis that the Allies were losing an opportunity to weaken Germany in the moral sense and also to define the essentially just conditions on which peace might be made. Briand was no defeatist, and was always convinced that the war must end by the breaking of German military power. But he wished to use brains as well as force.

Germany, he told Colonel House, had prosecuted the war both from a military and an ideological point of view; as regards the latter, she had shown greater intelligence than the Allies by constantly keeping before her people the one idea that she was fighting to prevent her economic extinction and to preserve her territory from dismemberment. She had neglected no opportunity to impress upon her people that they must continue to fight, because if the Allies were successful the condition of the German people would become one of abject servitude, through an economic domination over Germany and by the obligations which the people would be obliged to assume in the enormous financial burden placed upon a dismembered Germany.

It was necessary, said Briand, that their war aims should be formulated by the Allies in a concrete form, so that they

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lansdowne argued that negotiations might be attempted with Germany on the basis of certain guarantees, which he believed would enable the German liberals to overcome the imperialists; that the Allies were not seeking the annihilation of Germany as a great power; that she should be left the choice of her own form of government; that the Allies did not plan to destroy her commercial future; that they would, after the war, consider the questions connected with the freedom of the seas; that they would enter an association to settle disputes by peaceful methods. See above, p. 232, Colonel House's interview with Lansdowne.



could say to Germany: 'Here are our war aims, this is what we are fighting for; if you are willing to accept them we will have peace to-morrow.' He developed at some length his belief that a declaration of this kind, properly spread among the peoples of the Central Empires, would result in their urging or even compelling their Governments to undertake peace negotiations.

Colonel House was thoroughly in accord with the principle of Briand's suggestions. Only by a clear statement of revised war aims could the moral power of German defense be weakened. More positively it was important for Allied peoples to realize that the problem of the future settlement was different now from what it had been at the time the secret treaties were contracted. 'The future security of the world depended less upon juggling with boundaries than upon the destruction of Germany's power of offense. If the evil thing in Germany remained, no adjustment of territory would safeguard civilization; if it disappeared, such adjustment fell into its proper place as a means towards the greater end, to be applied with the concurrence and good will of the whole world.'<sup>1</sup> House had already written to President Wilson from London of his hope that for such reasons the Allies would agree upon a joint statement of liberal war aims.<sup>2</sup>

But House found that Mr. Lloyd George was committed too far to the British Conservatives to join enthusiastically in a plan for a liberal restatement of war aims, and at Paris the atmosphere was wholly unsympathetic. Clemenceau had undertaken his Ministry with the motto, '*Je fais la guerre,*' and feared lest such a manifesto on war aims might be regarded as a suggestion of pacifism. The Italians were dogged in their opposition and in their insistence upon the Treaty of London. Colonel House thus discovered that all he could hope for was to prevent any announcement of an imperial-

<sup>1</sup> Buchan, *op. cit.*, iv, 156.

<sup>2</sup> House to Wilson, November 11, 1917.

istic nature, and to secure, perhaps, a mild general restatement of war aims, not so liberal as he had desired, which might serve to reassure the Russians. He was also able to prevent the formulation of a policy, demanded by certain groups among the French and British, of assisting the anti-Bolshevik factions in Russia; a policy, he believed, which would merely unite war-weary Russia behind the faction that offered peace.

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, November 25, 1917

... I am refusing to be drawn into any of their [Allied] controversies, particularly those of a territorial nature. We must, I think, hold to the broad principles you have laid down and not get mixed up in the small and selfish ones.<sup>1</sup>

EDWARD HOUSE

[Cablegram]

PARIS, November 28, 1917

There have been cabled over and published here statements made by American papers to the effect that Russia should be treated as an enemy. It is exceedingly important that such criticisms should be suppressed. It will throw Russia into the lap of Germany if the Allies and ourselves express such views at this time.

EDWARD HOUSE

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, November 30, 1917

I intend to offer this resolution for approval of the Inter-allied Conference:

<sup>1</sup> Comment by Sir William Wiseman on this cable: 'If that had only been followed at the Peace Conference!'

'The Allies and the United States declare that they are not waging war for the purpose of aggression or indemnity. The sacrifices they are making are in order that militarism shall not continue to cast its shadow over the world, and that nations shall have the right to lead their lives in the way that seems to them best for the development of their general welfare.'

If you have any objections please answer immediately. It is of vast importance that this be done. The British have agreed to vote for it.

EDWARD HOUSE

President Wilson immediately replied, cabling his endorsement of House's proposal. The paraphrase of his cable runs as follows:

*Paraphrase of Wilson's Cable to House*

WASHINGTON, December 1, 1917

The resolution you suggest is entirely in line with my thought and has my approbation. You will realize how desirable it is for the Conference to discuss terms of peace in a spirit conforming with my January address to the Senate.<sup>1</sup> Our people and Congress will not fight for any selfish aims on the part of any belligerent, with the possible exception of Alsace-Lorraine. Territorial aspirations must be left for decision of all, at Peace Conference, especially plans for division of territory such as have been contemplated in Asia Minor.<sup>2</sup> I think it will be obvious to all that it would be a fatal mistake to cool the ardor in America.

Colonel House found it impossible, however, to persuade the Conference to agree upon even the mild resolution he

<sup>1</sup> The speech of January 22, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> These plans were crystallized in the secret treaties of 1915, 1916, and 1917: the Sazonoff-Paléologue Agreement, the Sykes-Picot Treaty, the Treaty of Saint-Jean de Maurienne.

had drafted. They were not ready to resign the hopes of territorial acquisitions. The Italian delegates, in particular, regarded the most general statement as dangerous, since it might imply that the Allies were released from the promises they had made Italy in 1915.

*‘November 30, 1917:* Baron Sonnino was as difficult to-day as he was yesterday. He is an able man, but a reactionary. . . . If his advice should carry, the war would never end, for he would never consent to any of the things necessary to make a beginning toward peace. . . .

*‘It was primarily a discussion as to what statement should be sent Russia. Balfour read a despatch from the British Ambassador at Petrograd, strongly recommending that the Allies release Russia from her promise to continue the war, giving his reasons for thinking this would be good policy. This brought violent opposition from Sonnino and a somewhat milder objection from Clemenceau. We finally sent for the Russian Ambassador here and asked his opinion. He decided against such a reply as the British Ambassador at Petrograd suggested, but recommended practically what I had proposed. It was finally decided to ask the Russian Ambassador to draw up a memorandum of what attitude he thought we should take and report to-morrow.*

*‘I shall push to a conclusion to-morrow or next day my suggestion that this Conference state the Allied war aims, in some such terms as I outlined in my cable to the President.*

*‘I feel a deep sympathy for the soldiers and sailors of the Allied nations who are dependent upon those of us here to give proper direction to the cause for which they are fighting. We are not doing all we could, and I realize it every time we meet in conference. . . . There is so little thought of aiding the military situation by diplomacy of a sane and helpful sort.*

*‘December 1, 1917:* The Lord Chief Justice and I had a long discussion on the Lansdowne letter and its effect upon the



British political situation. I thought Lloyd George was making a mistake in not insisting upon the resolution regarding a statement of our war aims. He could take the wind out of the sails of his opponents at home if he would join in pressing the Conference to do what seems to me so necessary at this time. . . . I called his attention to the lack of any [diplomatic] programme. The conferences we have with Clemenceau and Orlando are not fruitful of results, and the reason is that George and I never reach Clemenceau beforehand. It is perfectly hopeless trying to get Sonnino into anything progressive or constructive. . . .

'In our conference to-day various matters came up. The principal one was the resolution I had proposed. The Russian Ambassador was present and brought in several resolutions, any of which he thought would be of value to the Russian situation. Lloyd George tried to embody a part of what the Russian Ambassador said and all of what I had proposed. . . . It seemed to suit George, but it did not suit me. Sonnino then tried his conservative hand, and all the Conference approved excepting myself. I stated that in no event would the United States sign it; that they might draw up a resolution to suit themselves and sign it, but that the United States must rest just where we were now, that is, upon the broad constructive and progressive statements which the President had from time to time made.

'This threw the resolution in the "scrap-heap" because every one there knew that without the support of the United States it would be less than useless.' <sup>1</sup>

*Colonel House to the President*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, December 2, 1917

There have been long and frequent discussions as to Russia, but the result has not been satisfactory to me. I

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter for text of proposed resolutions.

wanted a clear declaration along the lines of my cable to you of Friday. England passively was willing, France indifferently against it, Italy actively so. They were all willing to embody what I suggested if certain additions were made to which I could not agree. It was decided finally that each Power should send its own answer to its Ambassador at Petrograd, the substance of each answer to be that the Allies were willing to reconsider their war aims in conjunction with Russia and as soon as she had a stable government with whom they could act.

The Russian Ambassador at Paris believes it of great importance that you send a message to Russia through Francis<sup>1</sup> or otherwise, letting them know of the disinterested motives of the United States and of its desire to bring a disorderly world into a fraternity of nations for the good of all and for the aggrandizement of none.<sup>2</sup>

EDWARD HOUSE

From the inability of the Interallied Conference to agree

<sup>1</sup> American Ambassador to Russia.

<sup>2</sup> It is not certain that Mr. Wilson received this cable before he finished his Message to Congress delivered on December 4. The following passage in that Message corresponds closely to the statement which the Russian Ambassador wished the President to send. 'The wrongs,' said Mr. Wilson, 'the very deep wrongs committed in this war will have to be righted. That of course. But they cannot and must not be righted by the commission of similar wrongs against Germany and her allies. . . . Statesmen must by this time have learned that the opinion of the world is everywhere wide awake and fully comprehends the issues involved. . . . The congress that concludes this war will feel the full strength of the tides that run now in the hearts and consciences of free men everywhere. Its conclusions will run with those tides.'

'All these things have been true from the very beginning of this stupendous war; and I cannot help thinking that if they had been made plain at the very outset the sympathy and enthusiasm of the Russian people might have been once for all enlisted on the side of the allies, suspicion and distrust swept away, and a real and lasting union of purpose effected. . . . The Russian people have been poisoned by the very same falsehoods that have kept the German people in the dark, and the poison has been administered by the very same hands. The only possible antidote is the truth.'

upon a restatement of the war aims of the Entente in a liberal sense sprang the Fourteen Points. Colonel House was convinced that before the war ended, a definite and a liberal basis of peace should be agreed upon, partly as a means towards ending the war, partly to ensure a liberal peace. If the Allies would not formulate such a basis, he hoped that it would be undertaken by Wilson.

On December 1 he cabled the President, 'I hope you will not think it necessary to make any statement concerning foreign affairs until I can see you. This seems to me very important.' On the copy of the cable is endorsed in his own hand, 'I sent this cable to the President because I had in mind his making a statement giving our war aims. I tried to get this done at Paris, but failed. The next best thing was for the President to do it.'

Almost the first subject which House broached upon his return to Washington was this, and within three weeks the Fourteen Points were drafted.

#### APPENDIX

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO COLONEL HOUSE BY GENERAL PÉTAINE  
[Translation]

December 6, 1917

##### *Training of the American Army*

It is necessary to hasten the training of the American army, both in the United States and in France, for the purpose of rendering its coöperation more rapid.

##### a) *In America*

General Pétain is prepared to send to the United States, if it should be necessary, supplementary Infantry instructors experienced in warfare.

An analogous measure for Artillery does not seem applicable by reason of the complications which the transportation of war material to the United States would involve. Artillery training must therefore take place in France. It is for that reason that it is necessary that the first group of divisions transported should include artillery.

##### b) *In France*

The training of the Companies, men, officers and subalterns, seems to be going well. The only thing lacking is the practice which can only be acquired in the sector.



Practice can rapidly be obtained at good advantage if the American army would, for a very short time, waive their feeling of national pride and depend completely upon the experience of the French army. Such practice would be the fruit of slower and more costly efforts if, desirous of flying too soon with its own wings, the American army gains its apprenticeship by receiving the lessons which the enemy will not fail to give it.

If the first of these methods is adopted it will be necessary:

*For the Company*

1. To continue its training at the rear — in contact with large French units and not by means of isolated instructors, as General Pershing had proposed;

2. To place the American army in a sector, not all at once in large units, but by fractions composed of: Regiments of Infantry, Groups of Artillery, . . . placed in the frame (*cadre*) of a large French unit.

This would be the case for each unit, for several weeks, up to the date when every one: chiefs of the units, frames (*cadres*), and men from the ranks, should have acquired the necessary experience.

*For the frames [Cadres]*

To have the general officers, Superior and of the Staff, whose training should be as complete as possible, execute numerous and prolonged periods of exercise, either before the arrival of their troops in France, or during the time that their troops are in the sector, under the conditions mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

*Conditions of Effective Coöperation of the American Army*

This will take place with the maximum of speed if the dispositions above indicated are carried out.

American units of aviation, isolated units, could thus enter into action as soon as possible without waiting until the training of the large units is considered completely terminated. There are two reasons why this should be the case:

1. *Military*

All of the Allies should put the maximum of their forces into line as soon as possible to meet the Russian failure;

2. *Political*

French public opinion, however great its admiration for the effort of the United States, would understand with difficulty why the effective manifestation of this effort should take so long in coming.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE SUPREME WAR COUNCIL

December 1, 1917

(1) They instruct their permanent Military Advisers to examine the military situation and to report their recommendations as to the future plan of operations:

(2) In order to provide the Supreme War Council with the material for their examination the Governments represented undertake;



## 288 INTIMATE PAPERS OF COLONEL HOUSE

(a) To supply the Supreme War Council with all such information of a general political and departmental character as is available for the war discussions of their own Cabinets or War Committees. This will include decisions of the Cabinets and War Committees relating to matters connected with the conduct of the War.

(b) To instruct their Ministries of War and General Staffs to furnish the permanent Military Advisers with their views and policy, with frequent regular statements of the order of battle and dislocation of their own and Allied Forces, and immediate notification of transfers of larger Units from one theatre of operations to another; with frequent regular statements of the order of battle and dislocation of enemy forces, with the reports embodying their conclusions as to enemy man-power, material and enemy conditions generally, and with immediate notification of important transfers and concentrations; with regular reports as to the strength of their own forces and memoranda on man-power situation and prospects; with regular reports of the existing and prospective position in regard to war material, and Military transportation. Commanders of the forces on the various fronts will in order to save time, repeat their daily communiqué direct to the Supreme War Council. Their more important Reports, as well as those of Heads of Military Missions and Military Attachés will be forwarded to the Supreme War Council through the respective General Staffs. The whole of the above information to be furnished with the least possible delay, in order that the Military Representatives shall be able to discuss the questions that will be raised at the Supreme War Council with a precise and up-to-date knowledge of the general military situation, and in complete touch with the views of their own Military Authorities.

(c) To instruct their Ministries of Marine (Admiralty) and Shipping to furnish the Supreme War Council with reports memoranda and appreciations bearing on the general condition of the War, and more particularly on problems affecting the transportation of troops and supplies.

(d) To instruct their Foreign Offices to supply the Supreme War Council with a general appreciation of the diplomatic situation at the present time, and henceforward to furnish regularly, and in the most expeditious manner possible, full information, whether received by despatch or telegram, on all diplomatic matters in any way connected with the War.

(e) To instruct their Departments dealing with Munitions, Aviation, Man-Power, Shipbuilding, Food (Stocks, Production and Distribution) and Finance, to furnish all the information necessary to enable the Supreme War Council to appreciate the situation from these respective points of view;

(3) In order to facilitate the reception and distribution of the information referred to above, each Section of the Supreme War Council will comprise a Permanent Secretarial Staff:

(4) The Permanent Secretarial Staffs of the respective Countries will, in concert, organize a Joint Secretarial Bureau for the production and distribution of the notices, agenda, protocols, and procès verbaux of the meetings of the Supreme War Council and for such other collective business as it may be found desirable to entrust to it.

*The Italian Front*

(5) The Supreme War Council instruct its permanent military advisers to study the immediate situation on the Italian front from the offensive as well as the defensive point of view, and to report to it as soon as possible, at any rate, within the next fortnight. The permanent military advisers are directed to make their requests to the Governments concerned for all the information they require, and the representatives of the respective Governments undertake to arrange that the information shall be furnished at once.

*The Transport Problem.* (a) General; (b) as affecting the Italian front.

(6) The Supreme War Council decide that it is desirable that the whole question of Inter-Allied Transport by sea and land shall be examined by a single expert, who shall report to it on the subject at the earliest possible date. It agreed that, if the British Government can spare his services, Sir Eric Geddes should be designated to carry out this investigation, and that, in the first instance, he shall examine the transportation problem as affecting the Italian and Salonika situations.

The representatives of the respective Governments undertake to give instructions to their technical experts and administrators to collaborate with Sir Eric Geddes, or, if his services cannot be made available, with such other expert as may be mutually agreed upon.

*The Belgian Army*

(7) The Supreme War Council instruct their permanent military advisers to examine and report on the utilization of the Belgian Army, and authorize them to apply to the Belgian Government, on their behalf, to furnish a report on the state of Belgian man-power.

*The Military Situation in the Balkans. The Supply of Greece.*

(8) The Supreme War Council decide:

(a) To recommend to their respective Governments that the food and other essential requirements of Greece, the promised military equipment, and the necessary means for transporting the same shall be supplied as a matter of military urgency.

(b) That its permanent military advisers shall follow up the question of the supply and equipment of the Greek Army.

(c) That its permanent military advisers shall study and report on the military situation in the Balkans, on the basis of information to be furnished by the Governments concerned.

(d) That the Governments concerned shall make the necessary financial advances to enable Greece to mobilize not less than nine divisions, and the Supreme War Council further requests the financial delegates of France, Great Britain and the United States of America to make, at once, the necessary arrangements for supplying Greece with the sum of 700,000,000 Francs, in the course of the year 1918, so as to clear off arrears amounting to 175,000,000 Francs, and to enable Greece to mobilize immediately not less than nine divisions.

## DRAFT RESOLUTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO RUSSIA

December 1, 1917

*Proposition by M. Maklakoff*

The Allied Conference, since there is in Russia no regular, effective Government recognized by the nations, addresses itself to all the citizens.

The Conference desires that every one in Russia should know that the Allies are determined to finish this war to the end but without any idea of conquest. Brought into the war by the odious militarism of Germany, they are fighting defensively and to assure peace upon the firm foundation of popular liberties. With this in mind, they will proceed to a revision of war aims together with Russia, so soon as there shall be a Government aware of its duties to the country and defending the interests of the country and not of the enemy.

*Alternative proposition combining proposals by M. Maklakoff and Colonel House*

The Conference of Paris — while affirming the willingness of the Allies to pursue without relaxation the struggle against the common enemy until the establishment of a definite peace founded on the right of nations to liberty — regrets that the absence in Russia of a regular Government recognized by the nation has not enabled it to submit in common to an exhaustive examination of the objects of the War.

Nevertheless, the Allies and the United States declare that they are not waging war for the purpose of aggression or indemnity. The sacrifices they are making are in order that the sword shall not continue to cast its shadow over the world, and that nations shall have the right to lead their lives in the way that seems to them best for the development of their general welfare.



## CHAPTER X

### THE ADJUSTMENT OF EFFORT

If this war is to be won, better team work between the Allies must be effected.

*Report of Colonel House to President Wilson, December 14, 1917*

#### I

THE Interallied Conference held its second and final plenary session on December 3, like the first purely formal in character and devoted to the brief reports of the expert committees. It was notable on the personal side in that it listened to one of the few speeches ever delivered by Colonel House, who had been asked by M. Clemenceau thus to close the Conference. He restrained his impulse to issue a public plea for a liberal revision of war aims, and limited his address to a couple of short paragraphs. 'I am writing something harmless,' he confessed to his diary.<sup>1</sup> 'I wish I could say what I would really like to say, but I do not dare to do so. More would be lost than could be gained. . . . I have determined to wait until my return and ask the President to say with all the authority back of him what ought to be said at this time.'

On the evening of December 6 the American Mission

<sup>1</sup> As delivered the speech fulfilled its purpose. Colonel House said:

'M. Clemenceau, in welcoming the delegates to this Conference, declared that we had met to work. His words were prophetic. There have been coördination and unity of purpose which promise great results for the future. It is my deep conviction that by this unity and concentrated effort we shall be able to arrive at the goal which we have set out to reach.

'In behalf of my colleagues I want to avail myself of this occasion to thank the officials of the French Government, and through them the French people, for the warm welcome and great consideration they have shown us. In coming to France we felt that we were coming to the house of our friends. Ever since our Government was founded there has been a bond of interest and sympathy between us — a sympathy which this war has fanned into passionate admiration. The history of France is the



slipped quietly out of Paris,<sup>1</sup> was taken to Brest by a circuitous route, and the following day embarked upon the *Mount Vernon*, to face the labors that awaited them in the United States. 'Colby said to-day,' wrote Colonel House on December 7, 'as the shores of France faded into the mist, "We have been so used to potentates and kings that the first thing we should do upon arrival in the United States is to take a week's course at Child's Restaurant, sitting on a stool, and getting down again to our own level." He thought also it would aid us in getting back to normal to take an upper berth on the midnight train from Washington to New York.'

The reference to 'potentates and kings' does not suggest the real achievements of the American War Mission. The conferences into which the technical experts had entered proved to be far more than a mere exchange of information. They had resulted in the drafting of a specific programme of economic coördination and established the machinery that was to put it into effect. It is difficult to overstate the significance of this accomplishment. 'Nations remember only the high spots of wars,' writes the High Commissioner for Franco-American Affairs. 'What did they grasp of the tragic period of 1917-18? The Rumanian disaster, Caporetto, the British Fourth Army, the Chemin des Dames.

history of courage and sacrifice. Therefore the great deeds which have illuminated the last three years have come as no surprise to us of America. We knew that when called upon France would rise to splendid achievement and would add lustre to her name. America salutes France and her heroic sons, and feels honored to fight by the side of so gallant a comrade.'

<sup>1</sup> 'Of all the mole-like activities of Colonel House,' wrote Mr. Grasty in the *New York Times* on January 22, 1918, 'the climax was his departure. . . . Only two persons knew the hour set for departure and where the party were going — the Colonel and the naval commander in charge [Commander Andrew F. Carter]. . . . Perhaps the Colonel had made a quiet bet with himself on his ability to take the party of fifteen or twenty persons out of the most conspicuous setting in Paris without anybody being the wiser.'

Were those the decisive events of the great struggle? No! The essential things were the problems of transportation, rotation of shipping and submarine sinkings, the financial problem, the problems of coöperation. Any shortcoming in the adjustment of effort, any breakdown in the machinery of supply, might have left our soldiers weaponless.’<sup>1</sup> It was in such terms that Colonel House judged the achievements of the Interallied Conference.

‘The good the Conference has done,’ he wrote while still in Paris, ‘in the way of coördinating the Allied resources, particularly the economic resources, can hardly be estimated. Heretofore, everything has been going pretty much at sixes and sevens. From now there will be less duplication of effort. What the United States can do better than Great Britain, France, or Italy we will do; what they can do better will be largely left to them. No one excepting those on the inside can know of the wasted effort there has been. This Conference may therefore well be considered the turning point in the war even though the fortunes of the Allies have never seemed so low as now.’

For such an adjustment of war effort the American experts were chiefly responsible; they regarded it as their function to enforce it upon the Allies, who had thus far, among themselves, failed in the American sense to bring the concentrated weight of their resources to bear in the struggle against Germany. The necessities of the situation were forcibly expressed in the following letter of Mr. Paul D. Cravath, legal adviser to the War Mission.

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 224.

*Mr. Cravath to Colonel House*

PARIS, December 6, 1917

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

. . . There has been a ghastly lack of coördination between the Allies throughout the war both as to military and political action, resulting in an incalculable waste of lives and effort. While it seems to be generally recognized that, as the result of the collapse of Russia's military effort and the disaster in Italy, there is greater need than ever for a close and sympathetic coördination of the efforts of Great Britain, France, and Italy, very little real progress has thus far been made in accomplishing that result. This is due, in great measure, to the apparently ineradicable mutual suspicion and differences in temperament and method between the British and the French. The relations with Italy are complicated by her own peculiar ambitions in the war which make full coöperation between her and France and England very difficult.

My observations lead me to believe that the recent conferences in Paris would have accomplished very little in the direction of the arrangements for coördinated effort had it not been for the presence of the American delegates and their patient but firm insistence upon conclusions being reached while the conferences were together. It would be difficult to overstate the good which you and your Mission have thus accomplished although the work of forcing effective coördination has only begun.

I am convinced that there cannot be an effective organization and coördination of the efforts and resources of the United States, Great Britain, France, and Italy for the winning of the war until the United States is represented here on the ground by an important representative in every department of effort with the capacity and authority to make prompt decisions in consultation with the home Government and to force an agreement between the British,

French, and Italians on the important questions both political, economic, and military, which will constantly arise. Indeed I think there should be duplicate organizations for London and Paris each headed by an able man supported by an adequate staff. . . .

The British and the French realize the need of the active intervention of the Americans and will welcome it.<sup>1</sup> Indeed one is startled by the almost universal feeling among the statesmen of both countries that they must look to the United States for the leadership and energy which are necessary for the winning of the war. We therefore have not only the power to enforce our decisions but there is a willingness to accept them. This is a terrible responsibility that our entrance into the war has forced upon us but it must be accepted to the limit if the war is to be conducted effectively. . . .

With best wishes, I am as ever

Very sincerely yours

PAUL D. CRAVATH

The Americans themselves, so far as their national organization was concerned, yielded to the necessity of centralization despite their general repugnance to it, and they demanded the same of the Allies in the international organization. They vested control in the various boards that ruled American industrial life with an iron despotism.

‘These domineering controllers of the economic and intellectual life of the United States,’ wrote Tardieu, ‘left a bad taste in the mouths of many citizens; yet they were the price of victory. Thanks to their control, a market glutted with orders, a market in which unbridled competition had led to an insane increase in prices, was reduced to order within a few weeks, with equality of treatment for all

<sup>1</sup> This conclusion does not entirely coincide with M. Tardieu’s opinion.



and a general fall in prices. Every need of America, every need of Europe, was satisfied. Demand here and supply there were adjusted to one another. Government, taking over factories and regulating transportation, became the absolute master of all production and distribution. An undreamed-of America was being created for the purpose of war.

‘This new America imposed the same law of uniformity upon its associates. . . . When Americans fall in love with an idea, even if their enthusiasm does not last, it is always intense. In 1917 and 1918, they had a passion for the organization of interallied war machinery, the weight of which was not always borne gladly by Europe. McAdoo did not succeed in forcing absolute financial unity, although with Northcliffe and myself he had drawn up plans for it, and doubtless the debtors lost more than the creditors. But in every other field the Americans finally had their way. After America’s entry into the war, the interallied boards in London and Paris, boards of control for steel, wood, oil, wheat, food, shipping, assumed their definite form and produced their best results. After four years of experiment and dispersion, control reached something in the nature of perfection towards the end of 1918. Had the war lasted another year, the machinery would have been running with incredible smoothness.’<sup>1</sup>

The historian disposed to wax ironical would probably observe that one great problem had been settled not by human ingenuity but rather by the force of events. The chief anxiety of the Allies in the summer of 1917 had been whether the United States could advance the credits that seemed necessary; their chief disappointment had been the unwillingness to promise the monthly half-billion desired. Mr. McAdoo would make no promises until Allied demands

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 234.

were coördinated. But by the end of the autumn the Allies no longer could use the credits which the United States was willing to advance, for the reason that the materials to be purchased by the Allies in America were not available. As Lord Reading had foreseen, a limit was placed upon Allied loans not by American incapacity to lend, but because the American market was unable to supply the tremendous demands for materials of both the American and Allied armies. You cannot spend money when the articles you want to buy are lacking.

This fact robbed of much of its significance the creation, immediately after the Paris Conference, of the Interallied Council on War Purchases and Finance. This council represented the nearest possible approach to the American Treasury's solution of the problem of confusion in Allied demands for financial aid. Sitting in London and Paris, under the presidency of the American representative, Mr. Crosby, it was designed to coördinate purchases by the Allies, to serve as a clearing house for information as to Allied needs for funds, and to develop a unified policy relating to loans that might be made to the Allies by the United States. It worked in coöperation with the Supreme War Council and other interallied councils.

As a result of the Paris Conference there were also created an Interallied Munitions Council, an Interallied Petroleum Conference, an Interallied Food Council, an Allied Maritime Transport Council. The Munitions Council was not effectively organized until the following summer, but the others came into active operation early in 1918. The Food Council, composed of the representatives of the food controllers of the Allied countries, was designed primarily to allocate stocks of food and prepare transport programmes. The Maritime Transport Council, seated in London, was to supervise the general conduct of Allied transport, and to obtain the most effective use of tonnage, while leaving each

nation responsible for the management of the tonnage under its control. Various other organs of interallied coöperation developed afterwards, as special needs became obvious.

Apart from the creation of such new interallied mechanism, the Paris Conference led to general agreements in the vital questions of blockade, naval coöperation, man-power, and tonnage. The Chairman of the War Trade Board, Mr. Vance McCormick, had carried on a long series of conversations with Lord Robert Cecil, British Minister of Blockade, and the French and Italian representatives.

‘In general it may be said,’ wrote Mr. McCormick, in his report, ‘that the conferences in London and Paris cleared the ground of all technical misunderstandings. The blockade authorities of the four countries understand each other from the point of view of commodities, industry, trade and exchange. Any question that may arise in these directions will from now on be trivial and easily settled by cable. There remain only questions of policy, which change with the progress of the war, and under these circumstances, future negotiations ought to be greatly simplified as compared to those of the past. The hearty coöperation afforded us in London by Lord Robert Cecil and in Paris by Minister Lebrun, and their respective staffs, make possible a much closer coördination of our work, and a better understanding with our Allies upon all blockade matters.’

As to naval affairs, the Paris Conference resulted in the creation of the Interallied Naval Council, designed ‘to insure the closest touch and complete coöperation between the Allied fleets.’ Its membership included the Allied Ministers of Marine and their chiefs of naval staffs, and flag officers representing the United States and Japan. This promised much for the future, but the conversations of Admiral Benson led to decisions of more immediate impor-



E. M. House whom I feel honored in calling my friend  
W. T. Benson

ADMIRAL BENSON





tance. In his secret memorandum for Colonel House he summarized them as follows:

‘Decision to send division of battleships to join British Grand Fleet immediately. Tentative agreement to send entire Atlantic Fleet to European waters in the spring provided conditions warrant such action. A joint decision to undertake with the British the closing of the North Sea by establishing and maintaining a mine barrage. An assurance by the British Government that the Straits of Dover will be efficiently closed, and that steps will be taken immediately with this object in view. Decision upon a definite plan of offensive operations in which our forces will participate in the near future. . . . Agreement entered into with British Admiralty which permits the officer commanding the U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters to attend the daily morning conference in the Admiralty. An agreement to have three of our officers detailed for duty in the planning section of the British Admiralty in order to secure closer coöperation and in order that we may have full information at all times as to just what plan of operations the British Admiralty may be considering. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

Admiral Benson did not conceal his admiration of the accomplishments of the British Navy. ‘I was particularly

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Benson makes the following comment, June 16, 1928: ‘The above were the result of numerous conferences between officials of the B.A. and myself. I was to find no suggestion had come from that side in these important points. It was absolutely necessary to close the Straits of Dover before planting the barrage across the North Sea. The British stated they could not get the anchors to hold on the slimy bottom of the Dover Straits. I suggested they cast large heavy blocks of concrete with long sharp spikes extending beneath them; these spikes would then stick down into the bottom and hold the blocks to which the lines for holding the mines could be made fast. Much to my surprise, as late as my visit in November, 1917, German submarines were still passing in and out through the Straits of Dover. This was stopped, and the barrage, of which we planted eighty-two per cent in the North Sea, practically bottled up the German submarine.’

impressed,' he wrote, 'with the magnitude of the task that had been undertaken by the British Navy in order to accomplish their purposes and with the success which their efforts were meeting. I was also very much impressed with the energy and zeal displayed by all British naval officers with whom I came in contact.'

## II

Whatever hopes for the future were stimulated by the programme drafted by the Paris Conference, the reports of the American War Mission indicated only too plainly the serious character of the immediate situation. All the members of the Mission were impressed by the exhaustion of Europe and the need of extraordinary exertions on the part of the United States, if defeat were to be averted. Colonel House, while praising the work of the Mission, was not optimistic as regards the plans for military coördination and stated frankly that 'unless a change for the better comes, the Allies cannot win.' Admiral Benson and General Bliss agreed that a supreme crisis was to be expected in the approaching spring, the outcome of which would depend largely upon the winter efforts of the United States and the influence we might exert in the direction of improved co-ordination. The confidential reports of all three were expressed in rather serious tones.

### *Report of Colonel House*

[Excerpt]

... If this war is to be won, better team work between the Allies must be effected. As now conducted there is great loss of energy and resources. Duplication is going on in some directions — in others men and money are being wasted.

The Central Powers are not overmatched, because their resources are perfectly mobilized and under single control.

The individual German soldier is perhaps not so good as the English, but the German military machine is superior to that of either England or France. The difficulties under which the English and Americans have to fight are a great handicap. Not only have they wide distances from which to gather their forces and maintain them, but these difficulties are enormously enhanced by having to create and maintain a huge army in a foreign land amongst a people with different habits, customs and prejudices.

The diplomatic end of such an undertaking is nearly as great as the military end, and General Pershing is beginning to realize this.

Unless a change for the better comes the Allies cannot win, and Germany may. For six months or more the ground has been steadily slipping away from the Allies. . . .

The English and French are insistent that our troops should be placed amongst theirs as soon as they come over. The argument is that it would give them better and quicker training, and would also help them [the English and French] withstand the great German drive which they believe is imminent. The drive, I think, will be made, and every possible help should be given them to withstand it, for if it is successful the war on land will have finished. On the other hand, they are asking us to do what the Canadians and Australians have refused to do. If once we merge with them we will probably never emerge. The companies and battalions placed with them would soon be mere fragments. Then, too, if they are placed in such a position they will not get along well with either the English or French and will never get credit for the sacrifices they make. It can, I think, be taken for granted that this plan would be the most effective immediate help we could give the French and English, but it would be at great cost to us.

We found the morale of the people high in England. The more fortune goes against them the steadier and more



determined they are to win. In France the morale was also good. There were no signs of weakening. In England the people are more sober than on my last visit. London is gloomy. There was a lack of bustle that I had never seen before and indications of depression. Every one seems now to realize what this war means, and the blitheness of former years has given way to grim determination. Food, gasoline and other useful commodities are being conserved. In France it is otherwise. Paris is normal in appearance. The streets are lively — the people cheerful, and food, gasoline, etc., are plentiful. . . . I was told that if restrictions were placed upon the French people they would rebel. That the only way they could be kept going at the top notch was to let them have their way in this direction. . . .

The Supreme War Council as at present constituted is almost a farce. It could be the efficient instrument to win the war. The United States can make it so, and I hope she will exercise her undisputed power to do it.

In conclusion I wish to record my appreciation of the individual work of the Members of this Mission. Whatever success it has had as a force for good is due to them. In all my experience of men I have never known better and more intelligent team work. There has been no confusion of purpose — no slacking in the pursuit of the objects to be obtained and there has been absolutely no personal differences or friction to retard their work. They have been amenable to both advice and suggestion and have left the impression in England and France of men of great ability and of equally great modesty. They have had to do with their opposites having the rank of Cabinet Ministers but no one who conferred with them for a moment doubted they were conferring with their equals.

E. M. HOUSE

*U.S.S. Mount Vernon*  
December 14, 1917

*Report of Admiral Benson*

[Excerpt]

... I believe that no time should be lost nor should any effort be spared to assist all the Allies at the earliest possible date and to the utmost extent by any means which will help towards the prosecution of the war.

‘In order for us to efficiently render assistance to the allied cause in keeping with our resources and expressed determination, a logical administration of tonnage having in view the defeat of Germany is imperative. It matters not what flag any ship or ships may sail under provided they are engaged in carrying out well-defined plans for the accomplishment of the above purpose which meet with the approval of the several governments concerned.

W. S. BENSON

*Chief of Naval Operations*

*On Board U.S.S. Mount Vernon*  
14 December, 1917

*Report of General Bliss*

[Excerpt]

... A military crisis is to be apprehended culminating not later than the end of next spring, in which, without great assistance from the United States, the advantage will probably lie with the Central Powers.

This crisis is largely due to the collapse of Russia as a military factor and to the recent disaster in Italy. But it is also largely due to the lack of military coördination, lack of unity of control on the part of the allied forces in the field.

This lack of unity of control results from military jealousy and suspicion as to ultimate national aims.

Our allies urge us to profit by their experience in three and a half years of war; to adopt the organization, the types of

artillery, tanks, etc., that the test of war has proved to be satisfactory. We should go further. In making the great military effort now demanded of us we should also demand as a prior condition that our allies also profit by the experience of three and a half years of war in the matter of absolute unity of military control. National jealousies and suspicions and susceptibilities of national temperament must be put aside in favor of this unified control, even going, if necessary (as I believe it is), to the limit of unified *command*. Otherwise, our dead and theirs may have died in vain. . . .

To meet a probable military crisis we must meet the unanimous demand of our allies to send to France the maximum number of troops that we can send as early in the year 1918 as possible. There may be no campaign of 1919 unless we do our best to make the campaign of 1918 the last.

To properly equip these troops so that we may face the enemy with soldiers and not merely men, we should accept every proffer of assistance from our allies, continuing our own progress of construction for later needs, but accepting everything from them which most quickly meets the immediate purposes of the war and which will most quickly enable us to play a decisive part in it. This should be the only test.

To transport these troops before it is too late we should take every ton of shipping that can possibly be taken from trade. Especially should every ton be utilized that is now lying idle, engaged neither in trade nor in war. The Allies and the neutrals must tighten their belts and go without luxuries and many things which they think of as necessities must be cut to the limit. Every branch of construction which can be devoted to an extension of our shipbuilding programme, and which is not vitally necessary for other purposes, should be so devoted in order to meet the rapidly growing demands for ships during 1918. The one all-absorb-

ing necessity now is soldiers with which to beat the enemy in the field, and ships to carry them.

TASKER H. BLISS  
*Chief of Staff*

*On Board U.S.S. Mount Vernon*  
14 December, 1917

### III

Such were the reports which Colonel House brought back from Paris. Their essence was contained in the mutual agreement that the United States must supply the men and the supplies lacking in Europe; the Allies would equip those men with their own surplus supplies and would find boats to help carry them. The War Mission landed in New York on Saturday, December 15.

#### *Colonel House to the President*

*U.S.S. Mount Vernon*  
December 15, 1917

DEAR GOVERNOR:

We expect to land this afternoon and if convenient to you I will take the 11.08 Monday morning, reaching Washington at 4.40 P.M.

I have had the Mission working all the way over on reports for their respective Departments and a summary for your information and that of the State Department. These are ready and go forward along with my own to Washington by Gordon to-night.

I hope you will find that the Mission has been successful and well worth while.

Looking eagerly forward to being with you again, I am

Your devoted

E. M. HOUSE

To this the President replied with a telegram: Delighted that you are safely back. He added that he looked forward



‘with the utmost pleasure’ to seeing House on the following day and hoped that he would stay at the White House.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Wilson was apparently chiefly interested in the plans for unity of military control and the possible development of the Supreme War Council. As he later explained to House he could not agree to send over the large American army that was needed unless he had guarantees that it would be utilized in the most efficient manner possible, regardless of national susceptibilities.

‘*December 17, 1917*: I came to Washington to-day,’ wrote House in his diary. ‘I drove to the White House first, intending to leave my bags and go on to Janet’s [Mrs. Gordon Auchincloss], but I found the President in his study waiting for me. We had a conference which lasted from five until seven o’clock. . . .

‘I gave the President a report of my activities in London and Paris and he seemed deeply interested. I shall not go into detail, but I recommended that he send General Tasker H. Bliss over as soon as he could make ready to act as our Military Adviser in the Supreme War Council. I explained the formation and working of that Council and how inefficient it had been made because of [the] determination to eliminate the British Chief of Staff and the General Commanding in the Field.

‘In reply to his query as to how matters could be remedied, I thought it would be necessary to wait until we had a force on the firing line sufficient to give us the right to demand a voice in the conduct of the military end of the war.’

The President then took up the advisability of sending an American political representative to sit in the Council with the Prime Ministers, and expressed his determination to send over Colonel House within a month or so. He added that he

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, December 16, 1917.

could not send any one else. Quick decisions would be necessary and a representative must be there who would not have to refer every detail back to the President.

This decision Wilson did not carry out until the following autumn, when he sent House over as his personal representative in the Supreme War Council.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, arrangements were made for despatching General Bliss immediately, as Military Adviser, so that he was able to attend the important meeting of the War Council at the end of January.

The President was evidently much impressed by General Bliss's arguments for the need of unified military control, even if it meant unified command. A short time later M. André Tardieu, returning from France, discussed the question with Wilson.

'In January, 1918,' writes M. Tardieu, 'on my return from Paris, where, in order to continue my work in America, I had refused a portfolio in the Clemenceau Cabinet, I had the following conversation with President Wilson about the Supreme Command. The President, to whom I pointed out the difficulties attendant upon such a measure, replied: "You will have to come to it, just the same. What does Mr. Clemenceau think?" "He is thoroughly in favour of it," I said. "Whom does he suggest?" asked the President. I answered, "General Foch." By his influence on England, Mr. Wilson from that moment never ceased to pave the way for the decision reached in March, 1918.'

<sup>2</sup>

There was another aspect to the question of the efficiency of the new plans for interallied coöperation. Could the United States make good the promises which the American War Mission had made providing for American men and

<sup>1</sup> See below, Volume IV, Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 235.

supplies? 'We and our allies each know,' said the *Newark News*, on January 3, 'what we are to do to play our part in the coördinated plan. . . . Now it is up to us democratic peoples to show that we can be more efficient in voluntary co-ordination than the Central Powers. . . . A plan is worth only what is made of it. It is a beginning and only a beginning.'

If the United States was to play its part efficiently there would have to be an immediate speeding-up and smoothing-out of the work of the war boards. Both in Europe and in America there was much pessimism. Colonel House received from the French and British constant reminders of the need of man-power and tonnage. They began with an explicit note from M. Clemenceau, setting down in clear terms the understanding reached by the military leaders as to the number of troops to be sent and the need of severe restriction of exports in order to make possible their transport. Other messages emphasized the need of materials, or of shipbuilding, or of letting the American forces go into the line in small units, as part of the French or British forces.

*M. Clemenceau to Colonel House*

PARIS, December 6, 1917

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE,

At the moment of closing the Allied Conference I beg to emphasize the dominant idea, always in our minds while drafting our programme, which compels the Allies 'to restrain their imports in order to liberate the most tonnage possible, in view of the transport of American troops.' The Government of the Republic feels that immediate coöperation between the Allies must be vigorously exercised at the moment of establishing a joint programme of imports, and that they must bear in mind the absolute necessity of reserving the tonnage indispensable for the transport to the Western Front of the American contingents.

The French Government made known to the members of



au Colonel de la  
Bien cordial souvenir

*F. J. H.*  
3.7.14.





the Conference of Maritime Transport that it estimated as follows the absolute minimum of American troops which ought to be transported to France:

For the present:

Two divisions a month — or 60,000 men.

Beginning with the month of April:

Three divisions a month — or 90,000 men.

Without counting the elements of Armies and the various services which would be in addition.

Which would make of troops to be received:

From now to the first of April	240,000	combatants
From first April to the end of 1918	810,000	“
Total	<u>1,050,000</u>	“

Mr. Colby <sup>1</sup> has been informed of the enclosed memorandum of General Bliss communicating the unanimous opinion arrived at by:

General Bliss — Chief of Staff of the American Army;

General Pershing — Commanding the American Expeditionary Corps;

General Robertson — Chief of Staff of the British Army;

General Foch — Chief of Staff of the French Army;

according to which 24 divisions are to be brought to France before the end of June, 1918.

While leaving to the experts the care of calculating the tonnage necessary to effectuate the transport of these contingents, the French Government adopts entirely the conclusions of this memorandum.

Please receive, Dear Colonel House, the expression of my sentiments of high consideration.

CLEMENCEAU

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

*December 15, 1917*

The most urgent problem at present is man-power to secure our Western line against the formidable German at-

<sup>1</sup> As representative of the Shipping Board.

tacks which may be expected through the winter. When these have failed, the military party will have lost the great temporary prestige which they now hold, and a strong Liberal reaction may be looked for. It is vitally important that the United States come to the assistance of the Allies with manpower immediately; that United States troops now in France should take their place by companies in the line with our men, as suggested to you in Paris, and also that reënforcements should be hurried from America at all costs. The next few months will be critical.

WILLIAM WISEMAN

*Mr. Lloyd George to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *December 15, 1917*

Having regard to Russian situation and the fact that both guns and troops are being rapidly transferred from the Eastern to the Western Front, the Cabinet are anxious that an immediate decision should be come to in regard to the inclusion with the British units of regiments or companies of American troops, an idea which was discussed with you at Paris. In the near future and throughout the earlier months of next year the situation on the Western Front may become exceedingly serious, and it may become of vital importance that the American man power available in France should be immediately used, more especially as it would appear that the Germans are calculating on delivering a knockout blow to the Allies before a fully trained American army is fit to take its part in the fighting.

LLOYD GEORGE

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *December 17, 1917*

We are receiving information from very trustworthy source to the effect that the United States shipbuilding pro-

gramme for 1918 is not likely to exceed 2,000,000 tons. You will realize from our discussions here and in Paris, which were conducted on basis that United States would produce 6,000,000 tons — afterwards increased to 9,000,000, how serious a view the War Cabinet take of this news. The American shipbuilding programme is absolutely vital to the success in the War. May I urge that immediate steps be taken to ascertain the real situation in respect to shipbuilding as all depends upon estimate being realized.

LLOYD GEORGE

*M. Tardieu to M. de Billy*<sup>1</sup>

[Cablegram]

PARIS, December, 1917

Make the American Government understand that we are about to enter upon an extremely difficult period. A heavy German attack on our front with reënforcements brought from Russia is almost certain before the end of the winter. Our army was never in better condition, nor was its morale ever higher. Lay stress upon that; it is the absolute truth. But for France to hold without risk of surprises, we need men, cereals, gasoline, and steel. So the United States must make a great effort at once. 1. Hasten the arrival of troops. 2. Get wheat to the docks and apply to war transport 500,000 tons of shipping taken from commandeered vessels. 3. Take from Standard Oil eight or ten tank steamers. Load steel on all troop transports. See Colonel House. Give him this cable. Tell him that I am convinced that the issue depends on the next six months.

TARDIEU

#### IV

Anxious weeks followed the return of the American War Mission, for the strain of the emergency programme neces-

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 232.



sitated by Allied demands almost broke down the United States war organization while it was still in embryonic form. A letter to Colonel House from Mr. Thomas Nelson Perkins, representative of the War Industries Board on the War Mission, indicates the intensity of the crisis. It is typical of many others.

*Mr. Perkins to Colonel House*

WASHINGTON, January 15, 1918

DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

... In spite of the fact that many people are saying and writing substantially what I have in mind, I am going to inflict a letter upon you about the situation here as I see it, in the hope that you will see it in the same way, and will be able to do something about it which I obviously cannot.

I do not suppose that I begin to know or appreciate as you do the seriousness of the situation to-day. I do know, however, that the situation on the Western Front is so critical as to cause those who know best grave anxiety. I do know that the authorities in England and France regard it as vital that we should get a large number of men into France for service in the near future. I know that there are certain materials which we have got to furnish to the British and the French in order that they may be in a position to make the effort which they have got to make if they are going to hold the German army.

I believe that our failure to do what is expected of us by the French army may have a disastrous effect upon the French morale, so that our failure will not only deprive our allies of the physical help which they need, but it may also demoralize, perhaps seriously, their own forces.

In spite of the danger which my reason tells me may exist that the Germans may win the war within the next six or eight months, I do not believe that they will. My guess is that they will make a supreme effort and be unable to push

it through, and that after they have exhausted themselves by their supreme effort the war will wear down to another period of deadlock, which will last until either we are able to amass in France a force sufficient to make an overwhelming effort, or there comes a civilian break on one side or the other which will bring about an end of the war.

In addition to a German victory, I believe that there is another danger that is worthy of consideration, and that is the danger that the people of some of the countries exhausted by the state of war may overthrow the Governments, so that the world will be facing, to a greater or less extent, the conditions which now exist in Russia. I believe that the longer the war lasts the greater is this danger. I don't think that this danger is going to materialize, but I don't think it is wholly impossible.

On both accounts I think it is most essential that we should do everything in our power to bring the war to a successful conclusion at the earliest possible moment.

I think that the contribution that the President has made, in seeing as no other national leader has done, the underlying principles of the struggle, and in calling attention to and emphasizing those principles, has been a great contribution. But this contribution is not enough unless it is backed by the physical contribution of men and materials. Our allies may be crushed; and even if they are not, the value of the contribution will be lessened because it may come to be regarded as the vision of a dreamer at the head of a nation which is incapable of effective practical work.

When we come to consider the situation here from the point of view of practical work, the results so far are not satisfactory. . . .

Obviously it is no time for indiscriminate criticism. Criticism in such a time as this is only excusable for constructive purposes, to ascertain whether changes are necessary, and then try to see what needs to be remedied and how.

That the situation has been bad there can be no question. That if the country should really know how bad the situation has been there might be a serious revulsion of feeling, seems to me probable.

Now the question is, what is to be done?

The two great things which seem to me lacking are:

1st. An organization; and

2nd. An understanding of the seriousness of the problem that is facing us.

To-day there is no body or person in our Government whose function it is to decide what is the practical plan of the Government. . . .

In addition to a body to determine what is to be done, I am also satisfied that there should be a body whose job it is to supply the needs as formulated by the first body. The most efficient supply department in the world, however, can be of no real use unless there is somebody to determine what is to be supplied.

Yours very truly

THOMAS N. PERKINS

[Added in longhand:] Can you do anything about this? We are talking — Time is passing — Time is very much of the essence — Practically every one I see has the same view. . . . Can't the good work be pushed?

The process of centralizing responsibility, through which a real organization was finally developed, is not fully revealed by the papers of Colonel House. His connection with it consisted largely in his bringing to the President's attention the gist of such letters as the above. In the end, despite delays and mistakes, the chief needs of the Allies were met and America was able to contribute her share to the common victory.

'All my life,' writes André Tardieu, 'I shall remember the

United States as it then was. A vast war machine, quickened by patriotism; its soul aflame; one hundred million men, women, and children with every nerve strained towards the ports of embarkation; chimneys smoking; trains rushing through the warm nights; women in the stations offering hot coffee to troops on their way to the front; national hymns rising to heaven; meetings for Liberty Loans in every church, in every theatre, at every street corner; immense posters on the walls, "You are in it, you must win it." Immense and un hoped for achievement which despite the extremity of our peril and the righteousness of our cause had demanded weeks and months of preparation. In order to understand one another, to adjust both principles and their application, it had been necessary to adapt, to explain, to coördinate. The triumph of this adjustment spelled success. Haphazard methods would have meant failure.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *France and America*, 238.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE FOURTEEN POINTS

The President wishes me to let the Prime Minister or you know that he feels he must presently make some specific utterance as a counter to the German peace suggestions. . . . We have so far been playing into the hands of the German military party . . .

*Colonel House to Mr. Balfour, January 5, 1918*

#### I

THE positive importance of the American War Mission in Europe, as the preceding chapter indicates, is to be found in the effect it had upon the war effort of the United States. It made plain the necessity of speeding American production and training American troops; it led to the creation of the various interallied councils which provided for proper co-ordination between the needs of the Allies and the capacity of the United States to supply them.

Negatively the Mission was of equal historical importance, since by its very omissions it led to the Fourteen Points. Historians have often wondered why Wilson chose to make the speech of the Fourteen Points at the particular moment he selected. According to the evidence in the House Papers, it was because the American Mission failed to secure from the Interallied Conference the manifesto on war aims that might serve to hold Russia in the war and result in an effective diplomatic offensive against the Central Powers. Complete diplomatic unity between the Allies and the United States would have formed the most useful weapon in such a policy. Because of the failure to achieve this unity at Paris, President Wilson was compelled to undertake the diplomatic offensive on his own responsibility.

‘What is still lacking,’ wrote House at the close of the Interallied Conference, ‘and what this Conference has not

brought about, is intelligent diplomatic direction. It is disappointing to come to a gathering of this sort and not find an appreciation of the needs of the hour. We should have formulated a policy here as broad, as far-reaching, and as effective as the coördination of our military, naval, and economic resources has been. It should have been a world-appealing policy and one which would have shaken Germany behind the lines.'

Immediately after his return from Paris, Colonel House discussed this topic with the President. On December 18, in the study of Mr. Wilson in the White House, he recounted his effort to persuade the Allies 'to join in formulating a broad declaration of war aims that would unite the world against Germany, and would not only help to a solution of the Russian problem but would knit together the best and most unselfish opinions of the world. I could not persuade them to do this and now it will be done by the President.'

Mr. Wilson lost no time in deciding that, in default of an interallied manifesto, a comprehensive address by himself might prove to be the moral turning-point of the war just as the coördination of war boards and policies was likely to be the military turning-point. 'We did not discuss this matter more than ten or fifteen minutes,' wrote House in his diary on December 18. The Bolsheviki were already negotiating for a separate peace, and it was impossible not to return some sort of reply to their demand for a logical statement of why the war should continue. Germany must not be allowed to pose as the victim of Allied imperialist aspirations. It was important also to pledge, if possible, the Allied Governments to the principles of a settlement which would justify the sacrifices of the war and maintain the enthusiasm of the liberal and labor circles in Great Britain and France. On December 13 the Manchester *Guardian* published the texts of the secret

treaties released by the Bolsheviks, thus disclosing the character of Allied ambitions in 1915. Some corrective was necessary.

President Wilson was the man best qualified by position and ability to state the moral issues involved in the war in such a way as to meet effectively the sentiment of protest that was rising in liberal and labor circles and was actively expressed in Russia. He represented lovers of peace all over the world. He was the chief of the nation which controlled the balance of economic forces. His prestige had been greatly enhanced by the American War Mission to Europe and the American demand for the organization of military and industrial efforts. The following letter from the President of the University of Virginia illustrates the confidence he inspired in thoughtful Americans.

*President E. A. Alderman to Colonel House*

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.,  
December 18, 1917

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

I have just been reading the account of the results of your latest mission to the allied countries. I cannot refrain, as a citizen of the Republic, from sending you my word of deep admiration and appreciation of the thorough-going, statesman-like fashion in which you have carried forward this great business. The moral ascendancy of our country has stood forth boldly through all the uproar of the times, and it now seems clear, through the great purposes of the President and your own well-directed service, that a certain leadership in practical achievement is likely to come to us that may be the deciding factor in forcing the decision in the interests of freedom and self-government. The great task before us is to preserve our national will to win the war and to protect our Allies against social collapse and the dangers incident to a lessening capacity for resistance and resolution. Then we shall win, and



after that we may conceive of peace in terms of enduring justice and wisdom.

I thought the President's letter to the Pope the high-water mark of his papers in its breadth and dignity and beauty; but I think his latest message to Congress, both in what it said and left unsaid, in what it intimated and suggested, a very close second to that remarkable document.

I recall the peaceful voyage of 1914 that we made together in the *Imperator*, while the German plans were being laid, and I have watched with ever-increasing pride your great work for the nation in this time of trial and sacrifice.

Faithfully yours

EDWIN A. ALDERMAN

By appearing before all the belligerents as spokesman for the liberals and peace-loving folk, Wilson brought to the Allies factors of political strength which in the end helped towards victory in a degree not always appreciated by those who think that wars are won by cannon and by blockades alone. The approaching campaign of 1918 would test the morale of Allied peoples as nothing before. Not merely men and ships, but an absolute conviction of the justice of their cause would be essential to a firm defense.

Once decided upon the necessity of a formal restatement of war aims, the President asked House to collect and arrange the materials for his address, in collaboration with the group of experts who since September had been gathering data for use at the Peace Conference. At the time of the return of the House Mission from Europe, the Inquiry was still little more than a central committee aided by a few well-known authorities upon geographic, economic, and legal questions. But this committee was always master of the facts which had been collected, and preserved an invariable objectivity in its analysis of the surging and conflicting issues that arose from those facts. Hence when House returned from Washington



and intimated that Wilson was planning to deliver after Christmas what might prove the most important speech of his career, the Inquiry was able to produce within the space of a few days a complete territorial programme. General propositions were reduced to formulæ, the critical territorial issues were isolated, and recommendations drafted in accord with the principles which Wilson was known to approve. In all-day and all-night sessions statistics were gathered and simplified, and illustrative maps constructed, as justification for the recommendations that were made.

Some of these data House took with him on December 23, when he went to Washington to spend Christmas. The basic report of the Inquiry, which Wilson had before him when he constructed his speech, House brought down on a second visit, on January 4. This report was divided into two main sections. The first outlined the general diplomatic situation and the points that ought to be emphasized in the proposed diplomatic offensive against Germany: Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary, it was suggested, ought to be handled sympathetically; Germany should be threatened with economic penalties after the war unless she were willing and able to furnish guarantees that she had renounced imperialist policies: 'This is our strongest weapon and the Germans realize its menace. Held over them it can win priceless concessions.' The Western Allies should be encouraged: '(1) by an energetic movement for economic unity of control; (2) by utterances from the United States which will show the way to the Liberals in Great Britain and in France, and therefore restore their national unity of purpose. These Liberals will readily accept the leadership of the President if he undertakes a liberal diplomatic offensive, because they will find in that offensive an invaluable support for their internal domestic troubles; finally (3) such a powerful liberal offensive on the part of the United States will immensely stimulate American pride and interest in the war, and will assure the

administration the support of the great mass of the American people who desire an idealistic solution. Such a liberal offensive will do more than any other thing to create in this country the sort of public opinion that the President needs in order to carry through the programme he has outlined.'

The second portion of the Inquiry Report consisted of a statement of terms on eight territorial issues: Belgium, Northern France, Alsace-Lorraine, Italian frontiers, the Balkans, Poland, Austria-Hungary, Turkey. It concluded with a paragraph noting that out of the existing anti-German alliance was developing a League of Nations: 'Whether this League is to be armed and exclusive, or whether there is to be a reduction of armaments and a cordial inclusion of Germany, will depend upon whether the German Government is in fact representative of the German democracy.'

The sources of information necessary to an exact understanding of political currents in Europe were hard to come by in time of war; hence there was much in the report that revealed an ignorance of European conditions. But in the main lines the Inquiry recommendations were sound. At all events they represented the policy Wilson had already determined upon and embodied the principles of liberals in this country and abroad. These principles, as expressed in the Fourteen Points, were not original with either the Inquiry or President Wilson. The Inquiry simply performed the spadework of collecting opinions and facts in a convenient form for the consideration of the President, indicating the trend of opinion which seemed to be most clearly supported by the facts. President Wilson evaluated them in the light of what he believed to be practical idealism and clothed them in convincing phrase. The speech was great partly because of Wilson's genius for exposition, partly because it caught the shift of inarticulate opinion and expressed it with the authority of the President's high station. 'The President's words,' said the New York *Tribune* after the speech, 'are the words of a hundred million.'

## II

The recommendations of the Inquiry Mr. Wilson studied with care, especially those relating to the settlement of territorial issues, discussed them with Colonel House, and wrote shorthand annotations on the margin of the report, some of which with slight alterations he later embodied in his speech. He also went over a mass of memoranda supplied by European representatives, which House brought down to Washington on the evening of January 4.

‘I did not reach the White House until nine o’clock,’ wrote House. ‘They had saved dinner for me, but I touched it lightly and went into immediate conference with the President concerning the proposed message to Congress on our war aims. . . .

‘We were in conference until half-past eleven, discussing the general terms to be used, and looking over data and maps which I had brought with me, some of which the Peace Inquiry Bureau had prepared.’

The President decided that he would frame his speech with three special purposes in mind. First, as an answer to the demand of the Bolsheviks for an explanation of the objects of the war, such an answer as might persuade Russia to stand by the Allies in their defense of democratic and liberal principles according to which, as Wilson insisted, the peace settlement must be framed, and which would be trampled under foot by a victorious Germany. Second, as an appeal to the German Socialists, who had begun to indicate their suspicion that their Government was not really waging a war of defense, but rather one of conquest totally inconsonant with the Reichstag resolution of July. Third, as a notice to the Entente that there must be a revision in a liberal sense of the war aims which had been crystallized in the secret treaties. The President was especially disturbed by the Treaty of



London and the arrangements made for the partition of the Turkish Empire.

Mr. Wilson was aware of the extent to which Great Britain and France were committed to Italy by the Treaty of London.<sup>1</sup> It was important to make plain that the United States was pledged to principles that conflicted directly with that treaty in so far as it assigned foreign nationalities to Italian sovereignty. On this question there was no discussion between Colonel House and the President, and the latter wrote on the margin of the Inquiry Report the sentence which became Point IX. 'Readjustment of the frontiers of Italy along clearly recognized lines of nationality.'<sup>2</sup> This was in effect a denial of the claim of Italy to control the Adriatic and the German-speaking Tyrol as expressed in the Treaty of London.

The opposition of the President to the division of the Turkish Empire as outlined in the treaties of 1915, the Sykes-Picot Treaty, and the Treaty of Saint-Jean de Maurienne, was equally definite. A note in House's diary as early as the preceding August indicates that the terms of these treaties were common property, even before they were published by the Bolsheviks. 'They know in Turkey,' wrote House, 'of the secret treaties which the Allies have made among themselves, in which they have cheerfully partitioned Turkey.' Another entry, of October 13, refers to a conference with President Wilson: 'He thought he should say that Turkey should become effaced and that the disposition of it should be left to the peace conference. . . . I added that it should be stated that Turkey must not be partitioned among the belligerents, but must become autonomous in its several parts according to racial lines. He accepted this.' Further, on December 1, while House was at Paris, the President cabled him a warning to protest against the arrangements to parti-

<sup>1</sup> See above, Chapter II.

<sup>2</sup> In the speech, the word 'recognized' was altered to 'recognizable.'



tion the Turkish Empire.<sup>1</sup> He now decided, as in the case of Italy, not to make any reference to the treaties, but simply to lay down a general principle which might be used later to oppose imperialistic aspirations. Evidently he had changed his mind about the need of effacing Turkey, for he wrote on the margin of the Inquiry Report: 'The Turkish portions of the present Turkish Empire must be assured a secure sovereignty and the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule must be assured full opportunity of autonomous development.'<sup>2</sup>

After marking four other territorial points contained in the Inquiry Report, the President decided that he would postpone until the next day the task of drafting definitely his general recommendations and settling the order in which they should be presented. On the following morning, Saturday, January 5, as soon as he had completed his routine correspondence, he called House into his study and began the final outline of his speech and the arrangement of his definite points. Later he expressed regret that he was not able to include all that seemed necessary in thirteen points, his favorite number.

The record of the historically momentous conferences between Wilson and House, in which the Fourteen Points were drafted, is set down in House's diary. It is unfortunate that, if available information is correct, the President himself did not make notes of the conversation. Mr. Wilson kept no regular diary and doubtless did not regard this conference as more significant than many others he had with House. The Colonel's record was dictated carefully, and the accuracy of his diary notes in general is attested at every point where they can be checked; there is every reason to accept his ac-

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, December 1. See above, Chapter IX.

<sup>2</sup> In the speech the President added a clause to guarantee the freedom of the Dardanelles. He also reëmphasized the autonomy desirable for the nationalities by substituting the words 'absolutely unmolested' for 'full.' He further changed 'must' to 'should.' See below, pp. 329, 332.

count as exact. It is important to remember, however, that House is writing as a diarist with no thought of later publication; the reader should not be misled by the diary form of the narrative into the supposition that House was leading the conversation.<sup>1</sup>

‘Saturday was a remarkable day,’ wrote Colonel House. ‘I went over to the State Department just after breakfast to see Polk and the others, and returned to the White House at a quarter past ten in order to get to work with the President. He was waiting for me. We actually got down to work at half-past ten and finished remaking the map of the world, as we would have it, at half-past twelve o’clock.’<sup>2</sup>

‘We took it systematically, first outlining general terms, such as open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, removing of economic barriers, establishment of equality of trade conditions, guarantees for the reduction of national armaments, adjustment of colonial claims, general association of nations for the conservation of peace. Then we began on Belgium,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Isaiah Bowman as executive officer of the Inquiry had first-hand knowledge of the events leading up to the speech of the Fourteen Points, and has been good enough to read and criticize this chapter. As a commentary upon the House-Wilson conferences, the following paragraph from a letter of Dr. Bowman is interesting:

‘I still have the feeling that the report of the House-Wilson conferences is curiously one-sided. We have H.’s diary but not W.’s. We have H.’s opinion of how much he helped W., but not W.’s opinion. No one can doubt that H. (during the period of the World War) was the wisest counselor that ever a President had. This because of the *temper* of H. no less than the temper of W. H.’s mind is like a sleeve valve: no friction! His thoughts come clearly to one, through simple words directly spoken. This is not craft but art and genius. Yet W. too had an altogether extraordinary character: he was a genius, a very great man. I wish you could bring this out a little more by a phrase or a sentence here and there, not just by a peroration. It would make H. a still greater figure to have it clearly shown how great was the man he served, and in my opinion it would give a higher judicial quality to the account.’

<sup>2</sup> Naturally the time consumed in ‘remaking the map of the world,’ represents merely the time necessary to phrase conclusions which the President had reached after many months of thought.

France, and the other territorial adjustments. When we had finished, the President asked me to number these in the order I thought they should come. I did this by placing the general terms first and territorial adjustments last. He looked over my arrangement and said it coincided with his own views, with the exception of the peace association which he thought should come last, because it would round out the message properly and permit him to say some things at the end which were necessary.

‘In discussing these questions I urged, and made a strong argument for, open diplomacy. I said there was nothing he could do that would better please the American people and the democracies of the world, and that it was right and must be the diplomacy of the future. I asked him to lay deep stress upon it and to place it first.’<sup>1</sup>

‘I then suggested the removal, as far as possible, of trade barriers.’<sup>2</sup> He argued that this would meet with opposition,

<sup>1</sup> This appears as Point I in the speech: ‘Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind.’

<sup>2</sup> On October 27, 1917, House had written to the President: ‘I feel very strongly that something should be done at the Peace Conference to end, as far as practicable, trade restrictions. They have been and must continue to be a menace to peace. With tariff barriers broken, with subsidies by common consent eliminated, and with real freedom of the seas both in peace and in time of war, the world could look with confidence to the future.’

‘There should be no monopoly by any nation of raw materials, or the essentials for food and clothing.’

‘You announced in your Mobile speech the doctrine that no territory should ever again be acquired by aggression, and this doctrine is now generally recognized throughout the world. If you can now use your commanding position to bring to the fore this other doctrine which is so fundamental to peace, you will have done more for mankind than any other ruler that has lived.’

‘If you write such a message as we talked of, I hope you will think it well to say that the worst thing that could happen to Germany would be a peace made by a government that was not representative. That such a peace would inevitably lead to economic warfare afterwards — a warfare in which by force of circumstances this Government would be compelled to take part.’

Mr. Wilson, in his December Message to Congress, had already closely



particularly in the Senate. Nevertheless I thought that since the document was to be a readjustment of world conditions, it would not be a complete structure unless this was in it. The two great causes of war were territorial and commercial greed, and it was just as necessary to get rid of the one as it was the other. He made no argument against this, and proceeded to frame a paragraph to cover it.<sup>1</sup>

‘I then suggested a discussion of the freedom of the seas. He asked my definition of this term. I answered that I went further than any one I knew, for I believed that in time of both war and peace a merchantman should traverse the seas unmolested. He agreed to this, and the paragraph as framed read something like this: “Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war.”’

‘After the message had been entirely written and he had read it over three or four times, wondering how England would receive this particular paragraph, I suggested that he add to it that “the seas might be closed by international action in order to enforce international covenants.” The President seized this suggestion with avidity and added it. I gave as my reason for this that I had discussed the matter in England and I believed with this addition it might be acceptable to them.’<sup>2</sup>

followed the suggestion contained in the last paragraph of House’s letter. See above, p. 159.

<sup>1</sup> This appears as Point III in the speech: ‘The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.’

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph, which finally became Point II in the speech, read: ‘Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.’

For Colonel House’s definition of the ‘freedom of the seas,’ see Volume I, p. 408.

House was wrong in his belief that British opinion would be favorably



'One of the points we discussed was the reduction of armaments. He played with this some time before he could get it into its present form, which satisfied us both.<sup>1</sup> I need not go into the difficulties of that question because they are apparent to any one who has tried to work out something satisfactory.

'We had less trouble with the colonial question. At first it was thought he might have to evade this entirely, but the President began to try his hand on it and presently the paragraph which was adopted was acceptable to us both, and we hoped would be to Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

'We took up Belgium, and that paragraph was written without difficulty.<sup>3</sup> Then a long discussion followed on France and whether Alsace and Lorraine should be touched upon. I was in favor of not mentioning it specifically, if it were possible not to do so, therefore at first he put in, "All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored." We left it there and went on to other territorial readjustments, but came back to it time and again. The Presi-

affected by the addition of the last phrase. The feeling against the words 'freedom of the seas,' which had been so consistently chanted by the Germans, was strong, and this was the one point which provoked general objection in Great Britain.

<sup>1</sup> The paragraph appeared as Point IV in the speech: 'Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest points consistent with domestic safety.'

<sup>2</sup> This appeared as Point V in the speech: 'A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.'

<sup>3</sup> As Point VII, it read: 'Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.'

dent convinced me that it was necessary to say something about it, since the message was so specific as to other nations, and I could see he was right. I suggested then that it should read: "If Alsace and Lorraine were restored to France, Germany should be given an equal economic opportunity," and it was written this way and remained so until Monday morning.

'On Monday, after we had eaten lunch, the President said, as we were walking toward his study, "The only thing about the message that worries me is in regard to Alsace and Lorraine. I am wondering how that will be taken." I replied that it was practically the only point that disturbed me and I suggested that we try our hands on it again. As it was, I was afraid it would suit neither France nor Germany. I thought he might leave out the economic part and put in the assertion that it had been for fifty years a cause of unrest in Europe, and that a just settlement of the question was as much in the interest of Germany as it was to the balance of the world.

'He then wrote the paragraph as it now stands with the exception that he had "*must* be righted" instead of "*should* be righted," as I thought best.<sup>1</sup>

'We then went into a discussion of where "should" and where "must" should be used, and he agreed that where there was no difference as to the justice of a question the word "must" ought to be used, and where there was a controversy the word "should" was correct. He went through the entire message and corrected it in this way. He wondered whether that point would be caught. I thought it was certain it would be.

<sup>1</sup> The final text of this paragraph, which became Point VIII in the speech, read: 'All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.'

'My argument was this: The American people might not consent to fight for the readjustment of European territory, therefore in suggesting these readjustments, with the exception of Belgium, the word "should" ought to be used.'

President Wilson studied the paragraph upon Russia with particular care, for in a sense the Russian situation formed the chief *raison d'être* of the speech. The Bolsheviks had made their armistice with Germany, but it was not yet plain that they could agree on terms of peace. Lenin and Trotsky were not entirely at one, the former insisting that peace must be signed on any terms, in order to hasten the world revolution; the latter evolving a formula of 'no peace, no war,' which he believed would do more than anything to make plain the aggressive imperialism of the Germans, while it would save the Russian proletariat from continuing a war for the benefit of Entente imperialism. The power of the Bolsheviks, moreover, was still uncertain. America and the Allies must be careful not to strengthen it by an appeal to faction. Above all it was necessary to insist upon American friendliness to Russia and upon the unselfishness of American war aims. House showed to Wilson a telegram he had received from the Russian Ambassador, who since the Bolshevik Revolution no longer represented the party in power at Moscow, but whose understanding of the situation was tolerant and broad. It was this telegram, which he had received the previous month, that had influenced House to make his original suggestion of a restatement of Allied war aims.

*Ambassador Bakhmetieff to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, November 30, 1917

Although Lenin's Government, which seized control by force, cannot be regarded as representing the will of the



Russian nation, the appeal which it addressed to the Allies in proposing an armistice cannot remain unanswered; for any evasion on the part of the Allies in the matter of peace will simply strengthen the Bolsheviks and help them to create an atmosphere in Russia hostile to the Allies. Any formal protest against Lenin's policy or any threats will have the same effect; they will simply aggravate the situation and aid the Maximalists to go to extremes. . . .

BAKHMETIEFF

With this in mind House had consulted with Bakhmetieff before coming to Washington and what Wilson wrote, so far as its content went, approximated the draft of the Ambassador. The Colonel's account of the discussion with Wilson continues:

'I read him a sentence that I had prepared regarding Russia, which I had submitted to the Russian Ambassador, who thoroughly approved. I said that it did not make any difference how much the President resented Russia's action, the part of wisdom was to segregate her, as far as we were able, from Germany, and that it could only be done by the broadest and friendliest expressions of sympathy and a promise of more substantial help. There was no argument about this because our minds ran parallel, and what he wrote about Russia is, I think, in some respects the most eloquent part of his message.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This appeared as Point VI in the speech: 'The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest coöperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.'



‘He spent some time on Poland. I gave him the memoranda which the Polish National Council in Paris had given me, containing a paragraph which they wished the Interallied Conference to adopt, but which was refused. We read this over carefully and both concluded that it could not be used in full, but the paragraph as framed came as near to it as he felt was wise and expedient.’<sup>1</sup>

‘After the Turkish paragraph had been written, the President thought it might be made more specific, and that Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and other parts be mentioned by name. I disagreed with this, believing that what was said was sufficient to indicate this, and it finally stood as originally framed.’<sup>2</sup>

### III

No essential changes were made by President Wilson in his Fourteen Points after the Saturday morning session with House, except in the case of Alsace-Lorraine. Apparently the sole Point upon which he desired outside criticism was that relating to the Balkan settlement, concerning which the opinion of the head of the Serbian Mission in Washington was sought. In drafting this Point the President avoided specific recommendations, perhaps because he recognized the difficulty of understanding the complex issues in that region and felt compelled to seek refuge in rather vague generalities. Point XI, as he drafted it, ran as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Point XIII in the speech: ‘An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.’

<sup>2</sup> Point XII in the speech: ‘The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.’

‘Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro to be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relationships of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality. International guarantees to be entered into of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of all the Balkan states.’<sup>1</sup>

This paragraph was generally regarded by students of the Balkan problem as the weakest spot in the entire speech of the Fourteen Points. The resounding phrase ‘by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality’ really meant nothing, for in the Balkans such lines are nonexistent. The Inquiry Report, whether or not its specific recommendations would have proved wise, was at least nearer realities.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps because Wilson realized the

<sup>1</sup> The President made slight changes in phraseology in this paragraph before delivering his speech. The final form was: ‘Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan States to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan States should be entered into.’

<sup>2</sup> The Inquiry Report read as follows:

‘No just or lasting settlement of the tangled problems confronting the deeply wronged peoples of the Balkans can be based upon the arbitrary treaty of Bucharest. That treaty was a product of the evil diplomacy which the peoples of the world are now determined to end. That treaty wronged every nation in the Balkans, even those which it appeared to favour, by imposing upon them all the permanent menace of war. It unquestionably tore men and women of Bulgarian loyalty from their natural allegiance. It denied to Serbia that access to the sea which she must have in order to complete her independence. Any just settlement must of course begin with the evacuation of Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro by the armies of the Central Powers, and the restoration of Serbia and Montenegro. The ultimate relationship of the different Balkan nations must be based upon a fair balance of nationalistic and economic considerations, applied in a generous and inventive spirit after impartial and scientific inquiry. The meddling and intriguing of Great

weakness of this paragraph he sought outside advice; it came to him in direct and critical form.

'The paragraph about Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro,' wrote House, 'is interesting inasmuch as the President asked me to submit it to Vesnitch, head of the Serbian Mission to this country and Serbian Minister at Paris. He wished to get Vesnitch's reaction on it. . . .

'I sent for Vesnitch to meet me at Gordon's home, as I did not think it advisable to have him come to the White House. . . . He totally disagreed with what had been written and said it would not satisfy Serbia. He also said that peace should not be made at this time and that the discussion of peace should be frowned upon. I told him that since Russia, Germany, Austria, and Great Britain were actually discussing peace it was not worth while to argue as to whether a discussion was advisable or not; therefore I asked him to set forth concretely what he would suggest in preference to what I submitted to him. He wrote with some difficulty, underneath the paragraph which the President . . . had framed, the following:

Powers must be stopped, and the efforts to attain national unity by massacre must be abandoned.

'It would obviously be unwise to attempt at this time to draw frontiers for the Balkan states. Certain broad considerations, however, may tentatively be kept in mind. They are in brief these: (1) that the area annexed by Rumania in the Dobrudja is almost surely Bulgarian in character and should be returned; (2) that the boundary between Bulgaria and Turkey should be restored to the Enos-Midia line, as agreed upon at the conference of London; (3) that the south boundary of Bulgaria should be the Ægean Sea coast from Enos to the gulf of Orfano, and should leave the mouth of the Struma River in Bulgarian territory; (4) that the best access to the sea for Serbia is through Saloniki; (5) that the final disposition of Macedonia cannot be determined without further inquiry; (6) that an independent Albania is almost and certainly an undesirable political entity.

'We are strongly of the opinion that in the last analysis economic considerations will outweigh nationalistic affiliations in the Balkans, and that a settlement which insures economic prosperity is most likely to be a lasting one.'



This is what  
 the Pres. sent  
 me and I sub-  
 mitted to Vesnitch.  
 Vesnitch added in  
 his own handwriting  
 what he thought  
 should be paid.  
 Just.  
 Jan. 5/18

Roumania, Serbia, and Montenegro to be evacu-  
 ated; occupied territories restored; Serbia ac-  
 corded free and secure access to the sea; and  
 the relationships of the several Balkan states  
 to one another determined by friendly counsel  
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 ance and nationality. International guarantees  
 to be entered into of the political and economic  
 independence and territorial integrity of all the Balkan  
 states.

There will and there can <sup>not</sup> be in Europe any  
 lasting peace with the conservation of actual  
 Austria-Hungary. The nations kept in it, as  
 well Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, as Tche-  
 co and Slovaks, as Roumanians, and the  
 Greeks will continue to combat the German  
 no-Hungary domination.

In the direction of Bulgaria, Serbia stands  
 firm on the Treaty of Bucharest. The Allied  
 Powers have guaranteed to her this position.  
 It will be morally and materially





“There will and there cannot be in Europe any lasting peace with the conservation of actual Austria-Hungary. The nations kept in it, as well Serbians, Croats and Slovenes, as Tchecs and Slovaks, as Rumanians and Italians, will continue to combat the German-Magyar dominations. As to Bulgaria, Serbia stands firm on the Treaty of Bucharest. The Allied Powers have guaranteed to her these frontiers. It will be morally and materially impossible to get so rapidly an understanding of Balkan nations, which is of course desirable, and which may come. Bulgarian treachery can and shall not be rewarded. I sincerely believe that serious negotiations for the peace at this moment of the war would mean the complete failure of the policy of allies and a grave collapse of the civilization of mankind.”

‘Vesnitch gave me a history of the Balkans, particularly that of Serbia, and I had to check him, saying I had an engagement with the President.

‘The President was rather depressed at this first and only attempt to obtain outside opinion regarding the message. . . . I advised him not to change the paragraph in the slightest, and to go ahead as if no objection had been made, and this he did.’

It is rather surprising that the insistence of M. Vesnitch that a permanent settlement could not be secured so long as Austria-Hungary continued to exist did not lead to longer discussion between the President and Colonel House. The Serbian envoy was by no means alone in his opinion. Many authorities in France and Great Britain regarded the problem of the Austrian nationalities as the *fons et origo mali*. These authorities believed that it was necessary to face it squarely, just as they emphasized the moral and material aid which the subject nationalities, if properly encouraged, might bring to the Entente through revolution.

President Wilson had two alternative policies before him

He might proclaim war to the death upon the Hapsburg Monarchy and promise complete liberation to the Czechoslovaks, Poles, South Slavs, and Rumanians. He would thus bear assistance to a revolution that might end in the Balkanization of the Danube regions, but which would in the mean time go far to undermine the strength of the Central Powers. Or he might proclaim the right to 'autonomy' of the subject nationalities, which, however, should remain in some sort of federal union under the Hapsburg Crown. The peril of splitting up territories economically interdependent would thus be avoided at the same time that the self-government of the nationalities was assured.

The second alternative was chosen by the President. In common with the leading statesmen of western Europe, he believed that the political union of Austro-Hungarian peoples was a necessity, and he seems to have felt that once freed from German domination, the Hapsburg Monarchy would prove a beneficial force. Colonel House was of this opinion.<sup>1</sup> The Inquiry Report advised Wilson to pursue the rather tortuous course of threatening the existing Hapsburg Government with nationalist uprisings and at the same time showing it a means of safety through a refusal to accept German control in foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> 'Austria-Hungary is in the position where she must be good in order to survive.'

President Wilson in his speech of the Fourteen Points did not threaten the integrity of the Hapsburg Empire. Point X simply stated: 'The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous

<sup>1</sup> See above, Chapter VI, House to Wilson, August 15, 1917: 'On a basis of the *status quo ante*, the Entente could aid Austria in emancipating herself from Prussia.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Our policy must therefore consist first in a stirring up of nationalist discontent and then in refusing to accept the extreme logic of this discontent which would be the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary.'

development.' This was, indeed, as far as the leaders of the Entente wished to go. Mr. Lloyd George, at the same time, renounced any threats against the existence of the Hapsburg Empire. 'Though . . . the break-up of Austria-Hungary,' he said, 'is no part of our war aims, we feel that, unless genuine self-government on true democratic principles is granted to those Austro-Hungarian nationalities who have long desired it, it is impossible to hope for the removal of those causes of unrest in that part of Europe which have so long threatened its general peace.'

It is important to remember that the statesmen of the time were compelled to base their policy upon inadequate and frequently contradictory sources of information. They still believed in the possibility of preserving the union of Austro-Hungarian peoples and liberating the Hapsburg Empire from German control. But as it turned out the speeches of Wilson and Lloyd George were quite without avail. Whether the Dual Monarchy stood by Germany in her defeat or deserted her, it was doomed. As Czernin himself confessed, 'Austria-Hungary's watch had run down.'<sup>1</sup>

'We could have gone over to the enemy,' wrote Czernin. 'We could have fought against Germany with the Entente on Austro-Hungarian soil, and would doubtless have hastened Germany's collapse; but the wounds which Austria-Hungary would have received in the fray would not have been less serious than those from which she is now suffering; she would have perished in the fight against Germany, as she has as good as perished in her fight allied with Germany.'

The Entente was determined upon the defeat of Germany, and once this was accomplished the break-up of Austria-Hungary became inevitable. The solution of federal autonomy some years before might have settled the Hapsburg

<sup>1</sup> Czernin, *In the World War*, 37.



problem, but it was now too late. The disintegration of the Dual Monarchy had already gone so far that Austria-Hungary could no longer be held together except by a girdle of German bayonets. A realization of this fact would conceivably have hastened the end of the war, for instead of discussing such projects as 'autonomy' and 'self-government,' which irritated and discouraged the rebellious Slavs, American and Allied leaders might have launched the revolution which they could not prevent, and profited by it. As it was, the work of propaganda conducted by Northcliffe and Steed, with the coöperation of Masaryk and the South Slav leaders, which ultimately ate into the morale of the Hapsburg armies, was delayed, and assistance which might have proved invaluable to the Entente in the moment of supreme danger in the spring of 1918, was left on one side.

## IV

On the very day that President Wilson was drafting his speech of the Fourteen Points, Mr. Lloyd George delivered an equally comprehensive but quite independent statement of war aims to the Trades Union Congress.<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister, soon after his return from the Interallied Conference of Paris, appreciated the compelling necessity of a pronouncement by the British Government, in view of the Russian situation and especially in view of the memorandum upon war aims issued by the British Labour Conference. Colonel House had been given some intimation that Mr. Lloyd George might find it advisable to meet the increasing demand for an official statement, but he did not realize that

<sup>1</sup> The independence of the speeches of Lloyd George and Wilson is proved by the following documents. The reader should remember, however, that Lloyd George was as anxious to avoid conflicting statements as Wilson. Wiseman wrote: 'House had told Lloyd George in London what Wilson was likely to say.' Thus there was established a basis for a joint declaration of war aims by the Allies, if only the French and Italians had expressed their acquiescence.

he planned to speak so soon. President Wilson agreed that the British Government should be warned of his own address, and on Saturday morning Colonel House sent to Mr. Balfour the following telegram which the President himself drafted.

*Colonel House to Mr. Balfour*<sup>1</sup>

[Cablegram]

WASHINGTON, *January 5, 1918*

The President wishes me to let the Prime Minister or you know that he feels he must presently make some specific utterance as a counter to the German peace suggestions, and that he feels that in order to keep the present enthusiastic and confident support of the war quick and effective here, an utterance must be in effect a repetition of his recent address to Congress<sup>2</sup> in even more specific form than before.

He hopes that no utterance is in contemplation on your side which would be likely to sound a different note or suggest claims inconsistent with what he proclaims the objects of the United States to be.

The President feels that we have so far been playing into the hands of the German military party and solidifying German opinion against us, and he has information which seems to open a clear way to weakening the hands of that party and clearing the air of all possible misrepresentation and misunderstandings.

EDWARD HOUSE

<sup>1</sup> Endorsement by E. M. H.: 'This is the cable the President and I agreed to send to Lloyd George to-day. The President typed it. Washington, January 5, 1918.'

<sup>2</sup> The President's Message of December 4, 1917, asking for a declaration of war against Austria.

*Mr. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *January 5, 1918*

Negotiations have been going on for some time between the Prime Minister and the Trades Unions. The main point was the desire of the Government to be released from certain pledges which were made to the labour leaders earlier in the war. This release is absolutely indispensable from the military point of view for the development of man-power on the Western Front. Finally the negotiations arrived at a point at which their successful issue depended mainly on the immediate publication by the British Government of a statement setting forth their war aims. This statement has now been made by the Prime Minister. It is the result of consultations with the labour leaders as well as the leaders of the Parliamentary Opposition.

Under these circumstances there was no time to consult the Allies as to the terms of the statement agreed on by the Prime Minister and the above-mentioned persons. It will be found on examination to be in accordance with the declarations hitherto made by the President on this subject.

Should the President himself make a statement of his own views which in view of the appeal made to the peoples of the world by the Bolsheviki might appear a desirable course, the Prime Minister is confident that such a statement would also be in general accordance with the lines of the President's previous speeches, which in England as well as in other countries have been so warmly received by public opinion. Such a further statement would naturally receive an equally warm welcome.

BALFOUR

Judging from the tone of the final paragraph of the Balfour cable as well as from the fact that House did not send his cable until the morning of January 5, it seems likely that Mr.

Balfour wrote his message before he received that of Colonel House. At all events the Balfour cable did not reach Washington until Sunday, when it was given to House by Ambassador Spring-Rice. In the mean time the Saturday afternoon papers brought the news of the Prime Minister's statement. For a moment the President considered giving up his speech.

'When George's speech came out in Washington Saturday afternoon,' wrote House, 'the President thought the terms which Lloyd George had given were so nearly akin to those he had worked out that it would be impossible for him to make the contemplated address before Congress. I insisted that the situation had been changed for the better rather than for the worse. I thought that Lloyd George had cleared the air and made it more necessary for the President to act.'

It is of interest historically to emphasize the fact that despite the close similarity in the war aims expressed by Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson, the two statements were drafted absolutely independently. The President read Mr. Lloyd George's speech three days before he delivered his own, but the records of Colonel House show that apart from the point concerning Alsace-Lorraine (as to which he was apparently not affected by the British statement), he made no change in what he had already prepared.<sup>1</sup> Because of the similarity in the British and American manifestoes, the greater seems the pity that the other Allies could not agree to a joint statement which might have led to a united diplomatic front.

## v

President Wilson, having finished the exact terms of the

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested at various times that President Wilson based his Points upon Mr. Lloyd George's speech. Cf. especially an article, presumably by Mr. George Harvey, 'The Genesis of the Fourteen Commandments,' in the *North American Review*, February, 1919.



Fourteen Points on Saturday morning, completed the introductory and concluding portions of his address on the following afternoon. He asked House to come to his study to discuss it as a whole.

‘After luncheon Sunday,’ wrote House, ‘I went to the French Embassy to see Jusserand. He had a number of questions he wished to ask, the answers to which he desired to transmit to his Government. . . .’

‘When I reached the White House, the President had not finished the conclusion of his message and, since Gregory wanted to see me, I motored to his house and took him for a short drive. When I returned the President was waiting and he read to me the message as a whole. I again congratulated him. . . . I thought it was a declaration of human liberty and a declaration of the terms which should be written into the peace conference. I felt that it was the most important document that he had ever penned, and remarked that he would either be on the crest of the wave after it had been delivered, or reposing peacefully in the depths.

‘The point we were most anxious about was as to how this country would receive our entrance into European affairs to the extent of declaring *territorial* aims.

‘I suggested to the President that a possible criticism Germany might make was that since the United States refused to permit European nations to interfere in any way with the affairs in the Western Hemisphere, European nations should be equally insistent that the affairs in the Eastern Hemisphere be left to the nations therein. He admitted that this would be probably said; and the reply that he expected to make in that event would be that we were perfectly willing for the same principles to govern in the Western Hemisphere as we had outlined as being desirable for the Eastern Hemisphere.

‘He was quite insistent that nothing be put in the message

of an argumentative nature, and once or twice I suggested making an argument in favor of some of the terms, but each time he thought it inadvisable because it would merely provoke controversy. . . .

‘The other points we were fearful of were Alsace and Lorraine, the freedom of the seas, and the leveling of commercial barriers. However . . . there was not the slightest hesitation on his part in saying them. The President shows an extraordinary courage in such things, and a wisdom in discussing them that places him easily in a rank by himself, as far as my observations go. The more I see of him, the more firmly am I convinced that there is not a statesman in the world who is his equal.’

The speech of the Fourteen Points was thus completed on Sunday afternoon. On Monday the President made his alteration in the statement regarding Alsace-Lorraine so as to give it a positive and definite character. He then called in the Secretary of State and, upon his advice, made various verbal alterations.

As delivered Tuesday morning, the address came as a surprise. It was known that Mr. Wilson would speak to Congress, but very few persons, even among the Allied diplomats and members of the Cabinet itself, realized what the subject of the message would be. On Tuesday afternoon House met a Cabinet officer ordinarily very well informed. ‘I asked him how he liked the President’s address. He replied, “What speech do you mean, his message to Congress?” He was dumbfounded when I told him that the President had just delivered what was perhaps the most important utterance since he had been in office.’ This reticence was carefully reasoned and was not based upon a mere love of secrecy and surprise; Mr. Wilson met House’s objections to it squarely. ‘I was in favor,’ wrote House, ‘of giving notice to the world in Tuesday morning’s papers that the President would go

before Congress in order to give America's war aims, my idea being to have the whole world expectant. . . . The President's argument was that in giving out such a notice as I suggested, the newspapers invariably commented and speculated as to what he would say and that these forecasts were often taken for what was really said.'

## VI

Rarely in history has a speech dealing with such complicated issues been received with the applause that immediately greeted the Fourteen Points. It drew the approval of Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Frank Simonds as well as that of Mr. Morris Hillquit and Mr. Meyer London. President Alderman of Virginia wrote to House: 'The President's message . . . is simply beyond all praise. I dare to think that in the long ages it will take its place among the historic documents, not only of American history, but of world history, in its breadth, and vision, and strength. It strengthens the purpose and nerves the arm of every loyal American. It is leadership of the broadest and noblest type.'

The most striking appreciation of the address came from the New York *Tribune*, which had ever been unsparing in its criticism of the President.

*New York Tribune Editorial*

'Mr. Wilson's address to Congress yesterday will live as one of the great documents in American history and one of the permanent contributions of America to world liberty. In form as in substance the President's statement is beyond praise; he has spoken what his country felt; he has translated from vague aspiration to clear and definite fact the war aims of his fellow countrymen.

'In a very deep sense Mr. Wilson's words constitute a second Emancipation Proclamation. As Lincoln freed the



slaves of the South half a century ago, Mr. Wilson now pledges his country to fight for the liberation of the Belgian and the Pole, the Serb and the Rumanian. For the long-suffering populations of Alsace-Lorraine and the Italian Irredenta the words of the President of the United States are a promise of freedom after a slavery worse a thousand times than that of the negro. . . . In a sense the President has created, has visualized to a whole world, the rôle of America in the time of supreme tragedy. Without a selfish ambition, without hope or covert thought of selfish advantage, the United States has entered a world war to restore justice, honor, liberty in a world assailed by German barbarism and German ambition. . . .

‘President Wilson has done nothing finer; there is nothing more admirable in American history than his address of yesterday. In a single speech he has transformed the whole character and broken with all the tradition of American policy. He has carried the United States back to Europe; he has established an American world policy and ideal of international policy throughout the civilized world. . . .

‘Leadership, after all, consists in arousing in the millions not a sense of obedience, but a desire to follow. The greatest single merit of Mr. Wilson’s latest address is that it will consolidate a nation behind its Chief Executive and establish in all minds the conviction that of right and with full accuracy and accepted authority he speaks for them. The President’s words are the words of a hundred million. . . . To-day, as never before, the whole nation marches with the President, certain alike of the leader and the cause.’

*January 9, 1918.*

In Europe approval of the President’s speech was more cautious and less general. So far as it laid down conditions which Germany must meet, the British press was unanimous in its praise and hailed it as ‘another notable contribution in



the drumfire on the enemy's moral position.' The liberal papers spoke of the 'spiritual insight and divination of the greatest American President since Abraham Lincoln.' 'The supreme gift of Wilson to the world,' said the *Star*, 'is the gift of articulating and interpreting its anguished vision of the future.' But even papers ordinarily so sympathetic as the Manchester *Guardian* and the *Westminster Gazette* spoke with doubt and suspicion of Wilson's insistence upon the 'freedom of the seas,' and conservative opinion entered definite reservations regarding the League of Nations. 'Our chief criticism of the President's speech,' said *The Times*, 'is that in its lofty flight of an ideal it seems not to take into account certain hard realities of the situation. We would all rejoice to see some such splendid vision as he beholds clothed in flesh and blood, and we are all working toward it according to our lights, but some of the proposals Mr. Wilson puts forward assume that the reign of righteousness on earth is already within our reach.'

Something of the same skepticism appeared in French comments, although the President's pronouncement upon Alsace-Lorraine was hailed with relief. 'President Wilson's words,' said *La Liberté*, 'will make his name popular to the remotest villages of France.' But in Italy, the speech, in so far as it attracted attention, evoked discontent. In Point IX of the speech, Mr. Wilson called for a 'readjustment of the frontiers of Italy . . . along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.' This by no means met popular nationalist aspirations, and it was in marked conflict with the terms of the Treaty of London.

The Entente Allies did not appear willing officially to accept the Wilsonian programme, and in so far as the speech was designed to win from them a renunciation of the spirit of the treaties, it had no immediate effect. Not until the succeeding autumn were they persuaded, and then only with the greatest difficulty, to approve the Fourteen Points as the basis of the peace settlement.

Nor did the Fourteen Points exercise upon the Russian and German situations the immediate effect for which Colonel House had hoped. The Bolsheviki were quite untouched alike by Wilson's idealistic generalizations and by his specific programme. They remained distrustful and unheeding, suspicious of Entente imperialism and irrevocably hostile to American capitalism. In Germany, the Government, affronted by Wilson's demand for the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine, stood firm for the prosecution of the war and held the support of all but the Socialist press. Even *Vorwärts* questioned Wilson's sincerity and intimated that his purpose was merely 'to deceive Russia about a general peace and lure her once again into the morass of blood of the world war.' Symptoms of unrest appeared among the laboring classes, but they were insufficient to alter the preparations for the great Kaiser's Battle which Ludendorff planned.

The immediate purpose of the speech of the Fourteen Points as a political manifesto was thus not achieved. But its final importance remains. Later events gave to it supreme significance and made of it the formal basis of the peace settlement. Not so much because of the specific conditions that Mr. Wilson laid down, similar as they were to those of Mr. Lloyd George, as because of the spirit that inspired his speech, it became for liberals all over the world something of a Magna Charta of international relations of the future.

'An evident principle,' said Mr. Wilson in the concluding paragraph of his speech, 'runs through the whole programme I have outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak. Unless this principle be made its foundation no part of the structure of international justice can stand. The people of the United States could act upon no other principle;

and to the vindication of this principle they are ready to devote their lives, their honor, and everything that they possess. The moral climax of this the culminating and final war for human liberty has come, and they are ready to put their own strength, their own highest purpose, their own integrity and devotion to the test.'

It was the spirit of this paragraph that persuaded liberals in the Entente countries to regard President Wilson as the apostle of the new political order, and the smaller nations to hail him as their champion. It was this same spirit that compelled the Germans to ask whether they might not better accept the guarantees of security offered by Wilson than continue the devastating struggle. In the end it was to Wilson that the German Government turned offering to make peace, and it was upon the distinct understanding that his principles would prevail that they laid down their arms.<sup>1</sup>

The speech of the Fourteen Points was important also because of the position which it gave to the proposal for a League of Nations. Mr. Lloyd George, in his statement, approved the project of a League, but without the emphasis of enthusiasm necessary to assure his listeners that the power of the British Government would stand behind it. Mr. Wilson, chief of the Government of the United States, made of it the essential condition of any settlement, and thereby crystallized the hopes of those who looked upon the triumph of the Allies not as an end but merely as a means to an end. A writer whose sense of the practical was keen and whose opportunities for observing the current of events and opinion were unrivaled, thus summarized the situation:

'Thoughtful minds throughout the Alliance were . . . inclined to put the war purpose somewhat as follows: The anti-social, anti-national spirit of Prussianism must be broken in

<sup>1</sup> See below, Volume IV, Chapter VI.



the field, and thus degraded and banished from the world; but security for free development cannot be found merely in the destruction of the enemy, nor can it be won by annexations and adjustments, which involve a perpetual armed wardenship of the marches; it can be found only in the provision of a new international sanction to guarantee by the combined forces of civilization the rights of each unit. It will be seen that the center of gravity had moved a long way from the secret treaties of 1915.

‘Hence a League of Nations was the fundamental war aim; the rest were only machinery to provide a clean foundation for it. Unfortunately this was not fully recognized at the time by any Allied Government save America, and M. Clemenceau went out of his way to declare the conception unbalanced and unpractical. Yet it was the only practical ideal before the world, in the sense that it was the only one which met the whole needs of the case. If a statement of war aims was meant to solidify the Alliance and drive a wedge between Prussianism and the German people, then a sound internationalism must be the first item in the programme. It offered the Allies an enduring union, based on coöperation instead of rivalry; it offered the German people security for their rights of possession and development so soon as they discarded their false gods; it offered a world weary of strife some hope of a lasting peace.’<sup>1</sup>

To those who felt thus, the emphasis that Wilson laid upon ‘a general association of nations,’ in his speech of the Fourteen Points, guaranteed the leadership for which they were waiting. The speech pointed the way towards the great positive achievement of the Paris Peace Conference. Because of it there stands at Geneva a tablet thus inscribed: ‘A la mémoire de Woodrow Wilson, Fondateur de la Société des Nations.’

<sup>1</sup> John Buchan, *A History of the Great War*, iv, 156–57.



## CHAPTER XII

### RUMORS OF PEACE

A just peace is everybody's business.

*President Wilson, February 8, 1918*

#### I

At no period of the entire war was the diplomatic situation so confused and difficult as during the first three months of 1918. If it is hard for the historian to disengage the different issues and possibilities, how much more difficult for the political leaders of those days, without the assistance of hindsight and in daily receipt of contradictory information, to formulate and pursue a consistent policy. In Germany and Austria, as in the Allied countries, there was confusion of counsel, hopes of a negotiated peace, grumblings of the working class, mingled with the preparations for the great battles of the spring.

The essential military fact was the withdrawal of Russia from the war, and the opportunity thus given Ludendorff to transfer German divisions to the Western Front, where for the first time since 1914 he might hope to hold the superiority in man-power over the Allies. If Germany could make peace with Russia, he promised that the spring offensive would bring victory over the French and British before the American army could arrive. For the Allies, the problem of man-power with which to repel the German onslaught on the Western Front had become all-important.

The political leaders on each side were in the mean time concerned with the diplomatic factors which might help to turn the tide of military events. While Wilson and the Allies by different methods sought to weaken German morale, the German diplomats strove earnestly for peace with Russia. The Bolsheviks had agreed to an armistice in December,

but the peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk did not run a smooth course. Germany had accepted the formula of 'no annexations and no indemnities,' but when the principle was translated into concrete demands it was plain that the Germans planned to separate from Russia the border provinces, to form a belt of client states under German dominion. Indignation reigned in Petrograd, to which the Russian delegation returned for a ten-day conference with the Bolshevik Government. 'We had no illusions,' said Trotsky, 'as to the democratic leanings of Kühlmann and Czernin — we were only too well acquainted with the nature of the German and Austrian ruling classes — it must, nevertheless, be candidly admitted that we did not at that time anticipate that the actual proposals of the German Imperialists would be separated by such a wide gulf from the formulæ presented to us. . . . We, indeed, did not expect such an acme of impudence.'

'We are equally hostile,' said Trotsky on February 10, 'to the Imperialism on both sides, and we do not agree to shed any longer the blood of our soldiers in the defense of the one side against the other. In awaiting the moment — we hope it is near — when all the oppressed working classes of all countries will take in their own hands the authority, as the working people of Russia have already done, we are removing our armies and our peoples from the war. Our peasant soldiers must return to their land to cultivate in peace the field which the Revolution has taken from the landlords and given to the peasants. Our workmen soldiers must return to the workshops and produce, not for destruction, but for creation. . . . At the same time we declare that the conditions as submitted to us by the Governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary are opposed in principle to the interests of all peoples. . . . We cannot place the signature of the Russian Revolution under these conditions which bring with them oppression, misery, and hate to millions of human beings.'

With such a spectacular and futile gesture the Russian delegation left Brest-Litovsk; futile at least so far as the military situation went, since following the rupture of the armistice proclaimed by Germany, the Russians were shortly to be forced to sign the peace and subscribe to even more onerous conditions.

In the mean time the repercussion of the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk had important effects in both Austria and Germany, and combined with the echoes of President Wilson's speeches and with food troubles to precipitate one of the most serious industrial and pacifist manifestations of the war. The movement took the form of a general strike, protesting against the failure to obtain peace with Russia. In Germany, where the strike began on January 28, as many as a million left work, and the range of the strike covered not merely Berlin but Hamburg, Cologne, Kiel, Mannheim, Chemnitz, and many other industrial cities.

In Austria the Foreign Minister, Czernin, and in Germany the Chancellor, Hertling, found themselves compelled to reply specifically to Wilson's speech. They gave their addresses on the same day, January 24, and a comparison of their statements suggests that they had discussed them beforehand. Both accepted with a greater or less degree of enthusiasm the general points in Wilson's speech, such as open diplomacy, the freedom of the seas, the removal of economic barriers, the reduction of armaments, a League of Nations. In the matter of Russia and Poland, Hertling advanced the thesis that this settlement concerned only the states of central and eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup> Matters directly affecting Germany, such as Belgium and the return of the German colonies, Czernin left to Hertling, who was ambiguous as to Belgium and demanded the 'reconstitution of the world's colonial possessions.' Hertling also insisted that

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd George's speech of January 5 had given him an opportunity to make this point.



there could be no question of a dismemberment of Imperial territory (a reference to Alsace), and Czernin promised that Austrians would defend the German pre-war possessions 'as our own.' In the matter of territorial problems affecting Austria, such as Italian, Rumanian, and Serb claims, autonomy for the subject nations, and the details of the Balkan settlement, Hertling left the reply to Czernin, who refused to accept any advice as to the government of Austria-Hungary, and would not even promise to evacuate territories occupied by the Austro-Hungarian armies.

There was, in all this, little basis for a peace of negotiation, for the two disagreed with all of Wilson's concrete propositions, and accepted tentatively only his general principles; the Brest-Litovsk negotiations indicated the slight value that should be placed upon their generalizations. It was something, however, that the state of affairs in the Central Empires compelled both Czernin and Hertling to regard Wilson's Fourteen Points as a basis for discussion. In Czernin's speech, furthermore, there was a warmth of tone indicating a real determination to secure peace if it were possible, which distinguished it from Hertling's rather obvious eagerness to evade the issues, and, as the *Arbeiter Zeitung* pointed out, to discover an alibi for not discussing peace on the basis of Wilson's speech.

Hertling, like Czernin, realized the need of peace with Russia, for on that depended the transfer of German divisions to the West. But a general peace was far from his thoughts. That must be won on the battlefields and must be dictated by Germany; if the victory were less overwhelming than Ludendorff promised, Germany would take her profit out of the East. In the mean time strikes would be suppressed by force and the morale of the people maintained by speeches.

Czernin, on the other hand, sought the general peace as soon as possible, for Austria had little to gain and everything



to lose by the prolongation of the war. On February 5, at a conference in Berlin, Czernin had some violent passages with Ludendorff. The former was in favor of setting down in writing that Austria-Hungary was only obliged to fight for the pre-war possessions of Germany. Ludendorff was bitter. 'If Germany makes peace without profit,' he said, 'then Germany has lost the war.' 'The controversy was growing more and more heated,' Czernin noted, 'when Hertling nudged me and whispered: "Leave him alone; we two will manage it together without him."' <sup>1</sup> This was in reference to the draft of the Brest Treaty, but it suggests the rift between the pacific Czernin and the German military party.

## II

President Wilson watched with interest for any indications of the weakening of the 'will to victory' in Germany and Austria. The whole tone of his speech of the Fourteen Points had been in line with the policy of declaring relentless war upon the German military leaders and peace to the German people, which he had emphasized in his speeches of the previous summer. He would hamstring Ludendorff by encouraging the movement for peace and liberal reform in Germany and Austria, if it could be done without weakening the determination of the Allies to fight until a conclusive peace could be achieved. As in the summer of 1917, he commissioned House to follow events in the Central Empires through the reports that came in from Berne, Copenhagen, Paris, and London.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, *January 31, 1918*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

It looks as if things were at last beginning to crack. I do not believe Germany can maintain a successful offensive

<sup>1</sup> Czernin, *In the World War*, 275.

with her people in their present frame of mine. I hope the Entente will keep still and not do anything. . . . The situation is so delicate and so critical that it would be a tragedy to make a false step now.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

*Mr. Carl W. Ackerman to Colonel House*<sup>1</sup>

BERNE, SWITZERLAND

February 4, 1918

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

This letter is intended as a report on the political situation in Germany and the Central Powers. On January 28th I asked the Legation to send you a long telegram on this subject, but because the wires were 'crowded' it could not be sent in the form I had written it and I do not know how it reached you.

The address of the President, in which he stated the fourteen conditions of peace, has had the greatest effect upon the political situation within the enemy countries of any public address delivered since the United States has been a belligerent. It was successful in the following ways:

1. It separated absolutely, and I think permanently, the people and the Liberals from the Annexationists, the Military Leaders and the War Industrial magnates;
2. It forced the Austro-Hungarian Government to recognize the peace movement in that country and cemented the Dual Monarchy to the German Liberal party;
3. It gave more momentum to the revolutionary movement, which is under way in Germany, than the Russian revolution;
4. It increased the possibilities of success for the present

<sup>1</sup> Note by E. M. H.: 'Original sent to the President for his information.'

confidential negotiations which are taking place with Bulgaria; and

5. It made a tremendous impression upon the small European neutrals.

I need not go into detail in regard to these points because you have undoubtedly received through the Department full information regarding the strikes, the fight over Count Hertling's reply, and the dispute between Vienna and Berlin.

After Mr. Wilson's speech was printed in the Swiss papers, Dr. Louis Schultess, a former attaché of the Swiss Legation in Washington [was appointed] to study the question of a League of Nations and report on what part Switzerland could play in the formation of such an organization.

In my telegram of January 28th I suggested that the President reply to Count Hertling and Count Czernin in order to force the issue of peace on our terms, which are essentially the terms of the German and Austrian people, or of war on Count Hertling's terms.

I believe that we should adopt a firm, determined, and uncompromising attitude toward Count Hertling on the ground that he voiced the sentiments of the German War Party, which wants to continue the war, and on the ground that he did not speak for the people.

I suggested that we assume a different attitude towards Vienna for the purpose of attempting to widen the gap between the two belligerents.

Since I made these suggestions I have concluded that it was fear of revolution more than anything else which prompted Count Czernin to aim his remarks at the President and say that Austria-Hungary considered the President's terms as a possible basis for discussions. I believe our aim should be to strengthen the peace party in Vienna and Budapest so as to force Count Czernin to *ask* the United States, officially, to make peace between the Dual Monarchy and the Entente. Unless the Austrian Government succeeds in

getting food from Russia we may have an opportunity to talk separate peace with that country.

The situation within Germany and Austria-Hungary, to my mind, is the following:

If there is not peace, or a great military victory, there will be a revolution. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that there are three possible developments: 1. Peace; 2. Reformation; 3. Revolution, because I do not believe the German army and navy will be able to decisively defeat the United States and the Allies this year.

The war has reached the decisive period. To my mind, the problem facing the United States is this:

How far can the United States go in encouraging the peace movement and the reform forces within Central Europe without weakening the determination of the Allies to fight until a just peace can be concluded.

The solution is: War, relentless war with armies and speeches against the German War government but peace with the democratic, or reform, peace forces.

Very sincerely and respectfully

CARL W. ACKERMAN

The policy suggested by Mr. Ackerman, whose knowledge of Germany and the German psychology was based on close observation, was almost exactly in line with that laid down by the President in April, 1917. The war, now in its decisive stage, was being fought not merely by generals and soldiers, but also by statesmen to gain the enemy peoples. Germany had tried in vain to undermine the confidence of the Entente peoples in their leaders or in the righteousness of their cause; she had no means of victory except that on the field of battle. But this new military offensive of Germany, coupled with the imperialist demands made at Brest-Litovsk, might enable the Entente leaders to separate the German people from their rulers, by strengthening the belief of the German work-



ing classes that the military leaders were prolonging the war and were responsible for their sufferings. If Wilson could intensify the effect which his speech of the Fourteen Points had made upon the German and Austrian workmen, he would be contributing as much to Allied victory as twenty divisions.

President Wilson was fully informed of the perils attendant upon this policy, which were especially emphasized by the officials of the French and Italian Governments. The determination of the Allied peoples must not be cooled by indiscriminate peace talk; any restatement of peace conditions might lead the working classes to believe that peace was already at hand and dull the enthusiasm for enduring the struggle until even moderate war aims could be ensured. So strongly did the French feel, that the censor refused to permit the cabling of one of Mr. Ackerman's articles, in which he advocated the Wilsonian policy.

*Mr. Carl W. Ackerman to Colonel House*

LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND  
April 12, 1918

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

. . . May I not call your attention to a conversation I had with M. Sabatier, of the Foreign Office, regarding an article which I wrote from Switzerland about the recent strikes in Germany. The object of this article for *The Saturday Evening Post* was to show the effects of the President's speeches upon internal affairs in Germany. I tried to show how the strikes were all organized demonstrations in favor of a democratic peace. The Foreign Office, after careful consideration, refused to pass the article for publication, because, as M. Sabatier said:

'We believe that President Wilson and the American people are making a big mistake in paying any attention to the so-called democratic movement in Germany. We could not

pass your article because we thought that it would weaken the morale of the American people; that it would make them hope that internal troubles in Germany would end the war when the war can be ended only by military operations.'

In reply I stated that I agreed with him that military operations were absolutely essential, but that I thought the Allies should play every possible card against Germany and that the President's speeches were political cards which had important political results. He would not agree with this statement and said that the Foreign Office could not pass my article. (A copy of this article, entitled: 'The Street Parliaments' has been forwarded to Mr. Grew.) . . .

Very sincerely and respectfully yours

CARL W. ACKERMAN

It is obvious that there was no unity of policy between the United States and the Allied Governments regarding the attitude that should be adopted toward the German reform movement. Wilson wished to encourage the Social Democrats and weaken the German 'will to victory' by the promise of a fair peace. He was disturbed, as he confessed to House, by the letters which came from Europe emphasizing the unwillingness of Allied leaders to follow him and by the suggestion that it was none of his business. 'A just peace,' he said to House, 'is everybody's business.'

Early in February an incident took place giving clear indication of the lack of diplomatic coördination between the Allies and the United States. On February 4 the Supreme War Council, which was in session to consider military plans, issued a statement regarding the speeches of Czernin and Hertling. The declaration itself was harmless and in accord with the facts; namely, that the two speeches did not furnish any basis for peace. But the abruptness of its tone and the failure to say anything calculated to encourage the German Socialists gave the impression of a challenge, which in

existing circumstances might throw the dissident elements in Germany back into alliance with the Government.

*Statement of the Supreme War Council*

*February 4, 1918*

‘The Supreme War Council gave the most careful consideration to the recent utterances of the German Chancellor and of the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, but was unable to find in them any real approximation to the moderate conditions laid down by all the Allied Governments. This conviction was only deepened by the impression made by the contrast between the professed idealistic aims with which the Central Powers entered upon the present negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and their now openly disclosed plans of conquest and spoliation.

‘In the circumstances, the Supreme War Council decided that the only immediate task before them lay in the prosecution, with the utmost vigour, and in the closest and most effective coöperation, of the military effort of the Allies until such time as the pressure of that effort shall have brought about in the enemy Governments and peoples a change of temper which would justify the hope of the conclusion of peace on terms which would not involve the abandonment, in face of an aggressive and unrepentant militarism, of all the principles of freedom, justice, and the respect for the law of nations which the Allies are resolved to vindicate. . . .’

From the report of the discussion in the Supreme War Council which Mr. Frazier sent to Colonel House, it appeared that the declaration was issued with some hesitation, especially on the part of the British, who realized the delicacy of the situation which might arise if a formal restatement of war aims were made without the participation of President Wilson. It also appeared that the Italians were anxious that



nothing should imply the weakening of their determination to carry out their annexationalist projects. The irony of the discussion lay in the fact that the political members of the Supreme War Council stated that the declaration was meant to further the Wilsonian policy, to 'detach the German people from the Military party,' and to serve as 'a deliberate invitation to the German people to repudiate the ruling caste.' At a later meeting, indeed, Clemenceau insisted that the declaration was entirely in line with Wilson's policy.

*Mr. A. H. Frazier to Colonel House*

*February 4, 1918*

The statement given out for publication was drafted partly by M. Clemenceau and partly by Lloyd George. The latter stated that he thought best not to make a formal restatement of the objects of the war, as it would be a declaration of only three countries and he felt doubtful whether President Wilson would endorse such a declaration when neither he nor Colonel House was present. He therefore considered it better to issue a statement of what the Supreme War Council had done in the matter of preparing for the prosecution of the War.

Baron Sonnino objected to a phrase in the original draft which read as follows: 'moderate conditions laid down by Mr. Lloyd George, President Wilson and M. Pichon.' He said that such a declaration on the part of Italy would be equivalent to a renunciation; that what Italy was fighting for was security and the future security of Italy was the very reason for which she had entered the war. As an illustration he mentioned that although the Allied fleets in the Adriatic were three times as strong as the Austrian fleet they were able to accomplish little due to the form of the Dalmatian coast. In deference to Baron Sonnino's views it was decided to make the phrase read 'moderate conditions laid down by all the Allied Governments.'



Baron Sonnino also objected to a phrase occurring in M. Clemenceau's draft, reading as follows: 'Dying fury of German domination.' Baron Sonnino was opposed to the phrase 'unrepentant militarism,' alleging that it was out of keeping with the greater moderation of the more recent utterances of the Allies and that it would not detach the German people from the military party as was its evident intention. Both M. Clemenceau and Lloyd George warmly defended the expression stating that it was a deliberate invitation to the German people to repudiate the ruling caste. The phrase was therefore allowed to stand.

FRAZIER

The situation was not without its elements of humor. Clemenceau and Sonnino were doing their best to fall in with the Wilsonian policy, which they did not favor, and yet their most sincere effort was greeted by the liberals in Great Britain and the United States as merely another declaration of reactionary imperialism. The British Liberal weeklies attacked Lloyd George for his subservience to Continental imperialism; they were doubtless correct in assuming that Italian claims made impossible any concessions to Austria, but they were singularly far from the mark in their belief that but for Clemenceau and Sonnino there would have been a complete and liberal restatement of war aims.

President Wilson was seriously disturbed by the declaration of the Supreme War Council, in part, perhaps, because he regarded its tone as unfortunate, in part because, although the United States was not formally represented upon the political side of the Council, the presence of General Bliss as military representative, and of Mr. Frazier of the Paris Embassy as liaison officer, might give the impression that the Supreme War Council spoke for the President in political matters. He was further disturbed by a statement regarding Russia issued by the Interallied Finance Board, which might

be taken to express American policy. He sent to House the draft of a telegram to Mr. Frazier, as well as a draft statement to be handed the Allied Ambassadors in Washington, which indicated his fear that wires would become crossed if the Interallied councils in Europe undertook to issue political manifestoes without previous consultation with Washington.

*Draft telegram for Mr. A. H. Frazier*

WASHINGTON, February 5, 1918

. . . You should make it very clear to the members of the Council that this Government objects to the publication by the Supreme War Council of any statement of a political character which carries with it the inference that the United States Government, on account of your presence and the presence of General Bliss, has been consulted and approves of such statement. You should point out to the members of the Council that statements issued by the Supreme War Council, upon which the United States Government has a military representative, naturally carry the inference that they are issued with the approval of the United States Government. The United States Government objects to the issuance of such statements by the Council as may in any way be considered political unless either (1) the text of the statement is first referred to the President for his approval, or (2) it is expressly stated in the statement that it has not been submitted to the Government of the United States. . . .

*Draft statement made for Allied Ambassadors in Washington*

February 19, 1918

Referring to the recent action of the Supreme War Council with regard to conditions of peace and to the action of the Interallied Board with regard to the recognition of the Bolsheviki authorities, I beg to inform you that the President wishes very respectfully to earnestly urge that when he sug-

gested the creation of an interallied board, and gave his active support to the creation of the Supreme War Council, it was not at all in his mind that either of these bodies should take any action or express any opinion on political subjects. He would have doubted the wisdom of appointing representatives of this Government on either body had he thought they would undertake the decision of any questions but the very practical question of supplies and of the concerted conduct of the war which it was understood they should handle.

He would appreciate it very much if this matter were very thoroughly reconsidered by the political leaders of the governments addressed, and that he might be given an opportunity, should their view in this matter differ from his, to consider once more the conditions and construction under which the representatives of the United States should henceforth act.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This letter, or one similar, was delivered by Secretary of State Lansing. The following cable from Wiseman to the Foreign Office explains the President's position:

'Lansing's letter ought to be considered in its relation to the background formed by the events of the last few months.

'The President was always opposed to United States representatives joining any Council of the Allies on the ground that they would inevitably become involved — sooner or later — in political questions which the U.S. ought to keep free from.

'It was pointed out to him, however, on various occasions: — by the P.M. in a letter brought by Lord R.; by W. and by House that the U.S. could not have an army in Europe and in fact could not take any large part in the war unless they were fully represented at the Councils which determined the use to which American troops and American resources should be put.

'The President finally agreed to —

a) Send a temporary American mission to Europe to discuss coöperation of every sort — political, military, financial, etc.

b) To be represented on the Interallied Supply Council.

c) To a military representative at the S.W.C. The question of a political representative at the S.W.C. was left in abeyance — a junior official being designated to attend its meetings merely to report on them.

'At the same time, the President was always strongly in favour of a Supreme War Council with the fullest powers to deal with all aspects of the military situation. The coördination of Allied and American military



## III

President Wilson had already planned himself to make a formal reply to the speeches of Czernin and Hertling, and his decision was probably reënforced by his fear that the declaration of the Supreme War Council might strengthen the position of Ludendorff in Germany. Intent upon driving the wedge between the German Socialists and Imperialists, he asked House to supervise the collection of excerpts from the Socialist press and speeches in the enemy countries. The President by utilizing the criticism leveled at the German Government by the Socialists themselves, using their own phrases, could emphasize the sympathy between them and Wilsonian principles and the mutual hostility to German imperialism.<sup>1</sup>

effort and, so far as possible, unification of direction has always been in the President's opinion essential to victory.

'On the other hand he has been careful to point out that the U.S. is not bound by any of the interallied treaties or agreements nor does the U.S. necessarily subscribe to all the war aims of the Allies.

'He would have had no objection to joining with the Allies in a general declaration of war policy but only after such declaration had been carefully considered by him in view of the special position of America. . . .

'Colonel House reported to the President on his return that it had not been found practicable for the Allies in conference at Paris to formulate any joint statement of War Aims. The speeches of L.G. and the President a little later seemed to indicate that this policy of separate announcements had been agreed among the Allies.

'The statement of the S.W.C. at its second meeting came, therefore, as a surprise to Washington and was open to two main objections —

'A statement on policy, as distinct from military plans was given out without consulting the President, and in such a way that the public here at any rate supposed that the U.S. was a party to the statement. The second objection was that the statement was not in accordance with the President's views or former pronouncements.

'The President took two steps to remedy this — first, he addressed Congress on the subjects of the German and Austrian speeches, and later instructed Sec. L. to write to the Allied Ambs., no doubt with the idea of having the matter on record in case of any future Senatorial investigation or enquiry.'

<sup>1</sup> The memoranda based upon this collection and upon an analysis of the German press, copies of which were sent to the President, when they are compared with German memoirs published since the war, indicate



Besides appealing to the German Socialists, it might be possible to make threats. Hertling's thesis that the settlement in eastern Europe was none of the Entente's business might be met with the rejoinder that in that case western tariffs were none of Germany's business, and there was nothing that the Germans feared more than a tariff war after the peace.<sup>1</sup> House had discussed this with the French High Commissioner. Extracts from his diary tell of the preparations for the speech the President planned, as well as the policy of economic threats.

*'January 27, 1918: André Tardieu came to ask if I would not advocate a chairman of an international board, consisting of representatives of Great Britain, France, and the United States, for the purpose of working out a plan for an economic war against Germany in the event it was necessary. His thought was that a plan should be ready . . . even though nothing was said of its formation. In reply I thought the only thing needful was the passage of a resolution by Congress, giving this Government power to put an embargo on raw materials for five years after the war. I thought this should be done without debate and with but little comment. It should be directed at no one, but Germany would get word of it through her agents and would know the significance of it. . . . Tardieu accepted this suggestion as being wise and simple. I added that England and France could also pass such measures and without comment, and that these laws should not be made at the same time, but at different periods*

admirable insight on the part of the State Department official, Mr. W. C. Bullitt, who compiled them.

<sup>1</sup> President Wilson developed this idea in his speech of February 11: 'Count von Hertling,' he said, 'wants the essential bases of commercial and industrial life to be safeguarded by common agreement and guarantee, but he cannot expect that to be conceded him if the other matters to be determined by the articles on peace are not handled in the same way as items in the final accounting.'

not widely separated. He said he would communicate with his Government and tell them of my views.

*'January 29, 1918:* The President told X that "we have tentatively decided to answer the Hertling and Czernin speeches in this way: In reply to Hertling's assertion that differences between Russia and Germany must be settled between the two, and questions between France and Germany should be settled in like manner, we will call attention to the fact that this is the old diplomacy which has brought the world into such difficulties, and if carried to its logical conclusion Germany and the rest of the world cannot object if England and the United States should conclude between themselves treaties by which the balance of the world would be excluded from their raw materials."

*'We discussed the best method of making his views public. This morning when I was with him, Lansing suggested that he give out an interview. . . . The President disagreed with this conclusion. He said he wanted to make a habit of delivering through Congress what he had to say. . . .*

*'He wondered what excuse he could make for going before Congress again. I suggested that he get a member of the Foreign Relations Committee to write him a letter which would call forth a promise to address Congress on the subject upon which he desired information. He objected to this, as he did not wish Congress to think they could control him in any way or take part in handling foreign affairs. I then suggested that he state that the questions now pending between the nations were of such importance he felt that every move he made, or contemplated making, or whatever thought he had concerning the international situation, should be communicated through Congress.*

*'February 7, 1918: [New York.] Y was one of my callers. I get information from him concerning the German frame of mind and how best to foment trouble between the Liberals and Imperialists in Germany. I am particularly anxious for*

such information now because of the President's forthcoming address.'

On the following day House received word through the State Department that the President expected to deliver his speech to Congress on February 11 and wanted him in Washington to discuss the draft he had written. Late in the afternoon he reached the White House, where the President met him.

'*February 8, 1918:* We first cleared the decks,' wrote House, 'by reading all the despatches bearing on foreign affairs that had come during the day, and by reading the address to Congress which he had prepared and was holding for criticism.

'We did not finish and start to dress until seven minutes of seven. I walked out of my room at seven o'clock, to find that the President had beaten me by a half-minute.

'After dinner we went into executive session and continued until bedtime. I did not interrupt while he read the draft of the message, but made mental notes of changes I thought necessary. . . . I felt that it was a remarkable document, but knew that much of it would have to be eliminated. . . .

'The President said he had departed from his usual custom and did not first write the address out in shorthand, but had typed it from the beginning, and had written it disjointedly and in sections. He usually devoted hours at a time to these messages, but in this instance on account of the pressure of affairs he did not do so. . . . I have never advised a quarter as many eliminations in any previous address as in this one. He had something about Alsace and Lorraine which I asked him to cut out. . . . He did so without comment. He did not argue with me at all when I pointed out changes. This in itself showed that he was not confident.

'The main eliminations were toward the end of the mes-



sage. I objected to his stating that we had 1,500,000 men ready to go to Europe and that we had 10,000,000 men that would go if necessary. . . . I thought the whole world knew, as well as he and I, of the resources of the United States, both in men and wealth.

'I objected to his making positive statements as to Czernin's opinions. In one instance I asked him to use the expression "it seems" rather than the more positive one which he used concerning Czernin. When he had finished polishing it off, we went to bed with no conversation upon other subjects.

'*February 9, 1918:* The President and I went over the message again to-day and made some minor changes. Contrary to his usual custom, he had Swem write the address in its entirety after we finished the corrections.

'He called in Lansing to-day around twelve o'clock and read it to him. Lansing made two or three suggestions . . . which the President adopted and which I think added to its strength.

'*February 10, 1918:* I walked to Gregory's again after Hoover left. While I was there the President came in and I returned with him to the White House. I was glad I did so, because it gave me the opportunity to express my feeling that his address to Congress still lacked something, and the something I thought it lacked was the focusing of the world's attention on the military party in Germany. I thought he should say that the entire world was now in substantial agreement as to a just peace with the exception of this small group who seemed determined to drive millions of men to their death in order to have their will.

'The President . . . took a pad and pencil and began to frame a new paragraph. This paragraph begins: "A general peace erected upon such foundations can be discussed," and ends with the sentence, "The tragic circumstance is that this one party in Germany is apparently willing and able to send



millions of men to their deaths to prevent what all the world sees to be just." . . .

'The President is not enthusiastic about it [the message], but I was certain it would meet with almost universal approval.'

Mr. Wilson delivered his speech in a joint session of Congress on February 11. He connected it directly with the speech of the Fourteen Points by referring to the replies of Hertling and Czernin. The series of speeches had thus something of the nature of open peace negotiations, characterized, however, by extreme generalization of phrase. The first portion of the President's address was a critical analysis of the replies of Czernin and Hertling. Count Hertling's programme of barter and concession he found totally inadequate: 'The method the German Chancellor proposes is the method of the Congress of Vienna. We cannot and will not return to that. What is at stake now is the peace of the world. What we are striving for is a new international order based upon broad and universal principles of right and justice — no mere peace of shreds and patches.' The essential justice of the final settlement was the business of all mankind. If Germany could not accept this principle, she could hardly hope for justice of treatment in the commercial world of the future. In conclusion the President stated in a new form the general principles of what he regarded as the only safe settlement:

'First, that each part of the final settlement must be based upon the essential justice of that particular case and upon such adjustments as are most likely to bring a peace that will be permanent;

'Second, that peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power; but that

‘Third, every territorial settlement involved in this war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned, and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims amongst rival states; and

‘Fourth, that all well-defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently of the world.’

Colonel House reported that the speech was well received by Congress, but without the enthusiasm that had attended earlier addresses of the President. Wilson’s purpose was to catch the attention of the liberal elements in Germany; in the terms of House’s diary, the President was ‘building a fire back of Ludendorff.’ Doubtless few of the members of Congress understood this purpose, and fewer still sympathized with it. Mr. Wilson apparently caught this lack of sympathy.

‘On the return from the Capitol,’ wrote House in his diary, ‘I drove with the President. He was only half pleased with his reception and only scantily hopeful of the success of his speech. . . .

‘After lunch, to Lord Reading’s. He has retaken his old quarters at No. 2315 Massachusetts Avenue. I was delighted to hear him say, “I would have given a year of my life to have made the last half of the President’s speech.” I said he would surely want to know why the last half. The reply was that the first half was merely a reiteration of Czernin’s and Hertling’s positions, but the last half was a noble utterance, both from an oratorical viewpoint and from that of a statesman. . . .

‘I returned to the White House, where the President was waiting to hear if I had any news from Reading. He was

delighted when I told him what Reading, Wiseman, and Gordon had to say. . . . I regard the President's January 22nd speech of 1917 and his January 8th speech of this year, the greatest he has made. In speaking of the January 8th speech I told the President that that was a great adventure. He stood to win or lose by it, while this speech was a perfectly safe proposition.'

## IV

The first direct result of Wilson's speech was evident on February 20, when House was called by telephone from Washington and told that a secret peace offer from the Emperor of Austria had been picked up by the British Intelligence Service, under the direction of Admiral Hall. The news did not come as a complete surprise. During the first week in February an Austrian Liberal, Dr. Lammasch, had been sent to Switzerland, where he had several long conversations with Dr. George Herron, who was supposed to enjoy President Wilson's confidence. Lammasch explained that the Emperor Karl was sincerely desirous of immediate peace and hoped that Wilson would take steps to bring it about at once in order to save Europe from the horrors that would result from the great German drive in the spring. The Emperor himself was ready, he averred, to reform completely the Austro-Hungarian Empire, instituting a sort of federal system which would assure autonomy and complete satisfaction for the subject nationalities.

Dr. Herron naturally replied that he could not speak for the President. He found the Emperor's plan hardly sufficient to settle permanently the problems of southeastern Europe, a plan which, in his opinion, was designed rather to tide the crisis over for the Hapsburg dynasty than to furnish a stable basis for peaceful relations between the nationalities. He urged Lammasch to persuade the Emperor to proceed with more imagination and liberality. Herron himself received



the impression that so great was the need of Austria, her demand for peace would be renewed.<sup>1</sup>

So it proved, for on February 19 Czernin telegraphed to the Austrian Ambassador in Madrid a message from the Emperor for transmission to the King of Spain, a message which contained within it another which he asked the King to transmit to President Wilson. A copy was sent to House with a request for his opinion.<sup>2</sup>

Here was a direct offer of peace based upon what read like a cordial acceptance of the conditions laid down by the President in his speech of February 11. But it took no note of the speech of the Fourteen Points nor of the more special conditions contained therein. Unlike the proposals of Dr. Lammasch, which intimated that the Emperor would apply the principle of self-government to all the peoples of Austria-Hungary, the Emperor in his telegram to the King of Spain apparently suggested a peace based upon the *status quo*. The single reference to *Italia Irredenta* indicated no willingness to concede an iota to Italian claims. These were essential parts of the general settlement and negotiations could not begin without more explicit assurance that Austria accepted the terms laid down in the Fourteen Points. The Emperor said nothing of German claims. Did he plan a separate or a general peace, and was the German Government in agreement with his acceptance of Wilson's conditions? Their demands upon Russia at Brest-Litovsk did not indicate the fact.

The danger of negotiations with Austria had been impressed upon House by Wickham Steed, foreign editor of *The Times* and the leading English authority upon the Hapsburg problem. He was at this moment engaged in the vital work of assisting the revolutionary movement among the

<sup>1</sup> This account of the conversations is based upon cables from the American Legation in Berne, copies of which were sent to House.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix to this chapter.



Austrian Slavs, which promised the shortest cut to Allied victory in southeastern Europe and which was imperiled by any hint that the Allies would throw over the Slavs in order to make peace with Austria on the basis of the *status quo*. Another authority on the Hapsburg problem, André Chéradame, wrote at length to Colonel House indicating the sources of danger.<sup>1</sup>

President Wilson was fully warned of the diplomatic perils attached to any peace negotiation with Austria, which in any case could not be inaugurated without consultation with the Allies. On February 23 he asked House to come over to Washington. House thus records in his diary the gist of the conference:

*'February 24, 1919: We had time before lunch to discuss the Austrian Emperor's note to the President, sent through the King of Spain, which the British have intercepted and already given us. We agreed that it would be well to ask Balfour's opinion of it and we outlined the following cable. The President wrote it on his typewriter.'*

*Colonel House to Mr. Balfour*

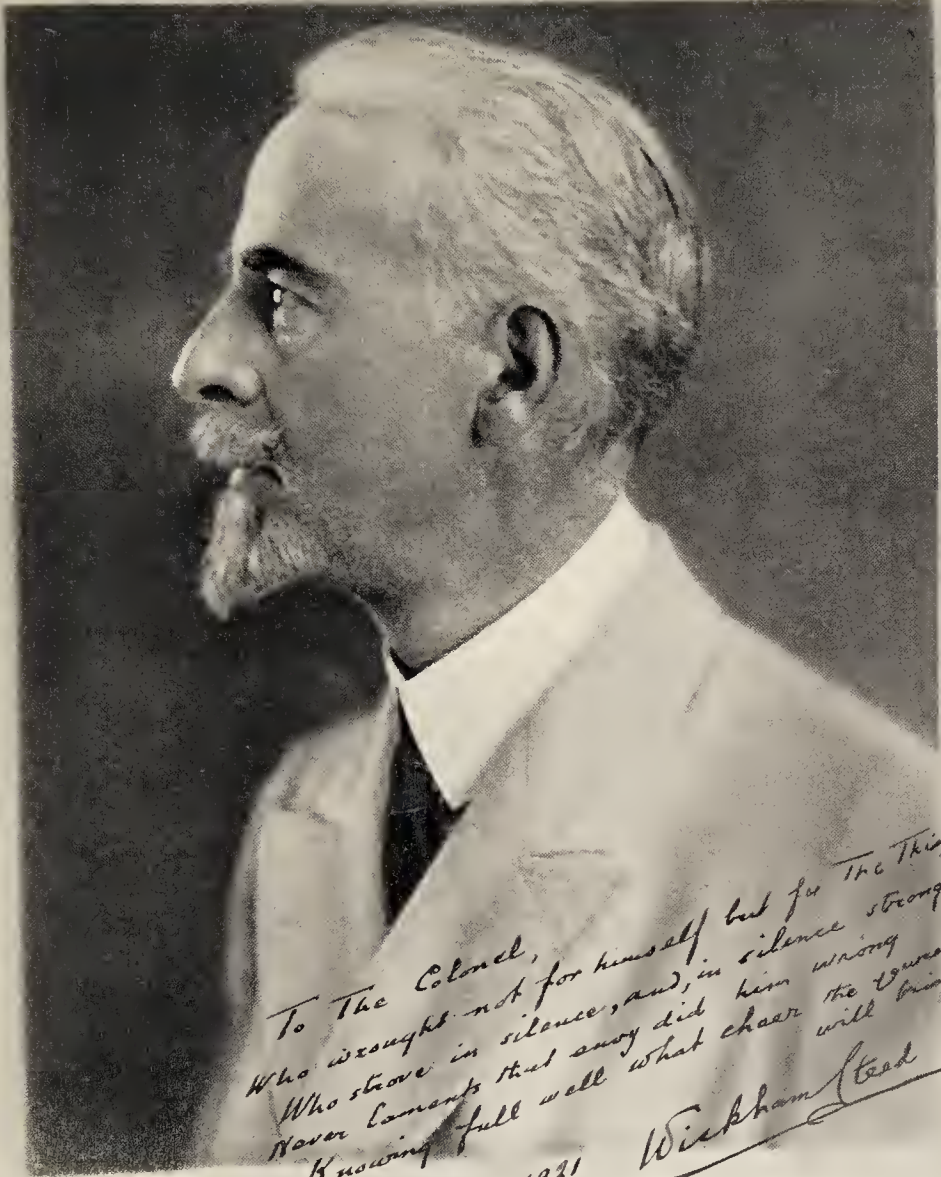
[Cablegram]

WASHINGTON, *February 24, 1918*

In view of the intercepted message from the Emperor of Austria to the King of Spain and your recent message to the President through me which I received on the 8th, the President would very much appreciate any comments or suggestions you may be kind enough to make. The actual message has not yet been received from Spain. How far would you think it necessary to go in apprising the Entente Governments of the character of the message from Austria?

EDWARD HOUSE

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter.



To The Colonel,  
Who wrought not for himself but for The Thing,  
Who strove in silence, and, in silence strong,  
Never laments that any did him wrong  
Knowing full well what cheer the Cause  
will bring

June 1921

William Stead



'February 26, 1918: This afternoon, the Spanish Ambassador asked for an audience and handed the President the note from the Emperor of Austria. The President said he had difficulty in composing his face and in trying to look surprised. He has written a memorandum in reply to Emperor Charles, which he read to me last night and which . . . is non-committal and seeks further information. . . .

'It is one of the most delicate and difficult situations with which he has yet had to deal. There is so much involved; it is not only the Austrian-German situation, but also the question of the Entente and our relations with them.

'February 28, 1918: The President was pleased with his interview with the French Ambassador. He expected rather a stormy time because he intended to tell him of his communication to the Austrians. Jusserand thought he was acting wisely. The Ambassador said that his Government had picked up some information which led them to believe that the two Kaisers, Wilhelm and Karl, had gotten the Apostolic Delegate in Munich to take their peace terms to Rome for the purpose of having the Pope use his good offices toward peace.'

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, February 27, 1918

Please express to President my very high appreciation of his confidence.

My views about Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs' message to him for what they are worth are as follows:

1. I am profoundly impressed by difference between Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs' official utterance conveyed through the King of Spain and personal policy of Emperor of Austria as embodied in a conversation between Professor Lammasch and Dr. Herron, of which we had an account from our Minister in Berne. First does not appear to go beyond



suggestion for return to *status quo ante* except that Bulgaria is to obtain a great deal that she did not possess before the war, while Serbia is to get something and to lose something, balance of loss and gain being on the whole against her.

These proposals are known to the German Emperor and doubtless represent his policy. They amount to a success for the Central Powers and can hardly be reconciled with public declarations of President on the subject of peace terms.

2. Proposals of Professor Lammasch through Dr. Herron are of very different tenour and I presume represent opinions of Emperor of Austria (in his then mood) unaffected by German influences. Professor Lammasch lays down with great emphasis and in quite unambiguous language the right of peoples to choose form of government and Emperor is reported as expressly desirous to see this principle applied to his own dominions. This scheme as far as it goes is in harmony with principles laid down by President and might therefore form a starting-point for discussion. But it is open to two very serious objections. In first place, it ignores Italy, and, in second place, unless matters be very carefully handled, it may alienate subject races of Austria whom President desires to benefit. Various Slav peoples have so often been fooled by phrase 'self-government' that they will be disposed to regard all schemes which are so described as giving them old slavery under a new name. They will draw no distinction between what President desires to give them and what they have already. What they have already leaves them completely subject, in Austria to a German minority, in Hungary to a Magyar one.

I need not insist on dangers both from Italian and Austrian side which conversations begun on Lammasch basis inevitably carry with them. The future of the war largely depends on supporting Italian enthusiasm and on maintaining anti-German zeal of Slav populations in Austria. Both Italians and Slavs are very easily discouraged and are quick

to find evidence in foreign speeches that their interests are forgotten or betrayed. I fear Austrian statesmanship will not be above using any indication that President had a tenderness for Austrian Empire, as a means of convincing Slavs that having nothing to hope for from the Allies they had best make terms with Central Powers.

3. But some risks must be run and, if President feels strongly that it is really essential not to close door to further discussion, it seems to me that it might be worth while to take some steps to ascertain if the Lammasch conversations really represented the mind of the Emperor and whether he would be prepared to treat them as a basis of discussion. Austro-German proposal through King of Spain appears so completely inconsistent with President's public declarations that it is hard to see how any discussion round a table can bridge the differences between them. In answer to question which President asks me about taking the Allies into his confidence, I suggest it must largely depend on policy he intends to pursue. When German proposals for a conference last summer were conveyed to me by King of Spain, I called Ambassadors of great belligerents including Japan to Foreign Office and informed them of everything that had occurred. This, in the circumstances, was quite easy and avoided all occasion for suspicion. It may not be so easy now. But my advice would be to follow this precedent if *Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs' proposals are in question*: but if, on the other hand, the President means to follow up Lammasch-Herron line I should in his place content myself with telling the Allies very confidentially that I was carrying on informal conversations with Austria and would communicate further with them if occasion arose.

I offer these suggestions with utmost diffidence and only in consequence of direct request which you have conveyed to me from President.

BALFOUR

*Colonel House to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

WASHINGTON, *March 1, 1918*

The President has asked me to thank you for your message. We waited until it arrived before coming to a decision. The President is glad to find (as he fully anticipated) your view is substantially in accordance with his own. He has replied to the King of Spain's message in a way which will not close the door to further discussion, but rather develop and probe what the Emperor of Austria has in mind. We feel that if this message indicates a genuine desire to meet the just demands of the Allies, it ought not to be rejected; and if, on the other hand, it is merely designed to cover annexationist schemes, it can be best met by demanding that the Central Powers shall apply the principles they profess to hold to concrete cases. If the Germans are not sincere in their expressed desire for peace, is it not of the highest importance to expose this before whole world — the German people themselves, if they will listen; certainly before the neutrals and any of those in Allied countries and the United States (particularly in Labor and Socialist circles) who may still believe in German professions. If any further conversations take place the United States will at the same time redouble her efforts to equip her own forces and assist the Allies. The President is well aware that an efficient army is at the present moment the best guarantee against the intrigues of German militarism. He cannot, of course, in any sense commit the Allies by these conversations, but he wishes to assure you that he has no intention of allowing the United States to be committed to any further steps unless the Central Powers are prepared to translate general principles into frank and concrete assurances.

The President will inform the Allied Ambassadors in the general sense of the above. He has considered most carefully



and is bearing in mind the very just observations you make in your message.

EDWARD HOUSE

Careful investigation of Austria's attitude failed to develop any possibility of winning the Vienna Government to an acceptance of the conditions which Wilson had laid down, or of separating Austria from Germany. It is possible that if it had been in his power the Emperor Karl would have made broad concessions; but he was bound to the chariot wheel of Germany. A peace based upon the *status quo* represented a victory for Austria-Hungary; it was the integrity of the polyglot empire for which she was fighting. Naturally she accepted the principle of no annexations. Such a peace was impossible for either France or Italy, since their purpose was the removal of conditions which had long threatened the peace of Europe and would disturb it in the future so long as Alsace-Lorraine and *Italia Irredenta* remained in the hands of their enemies; they regarded the annexation of these regions not as a spoil of conquest but as an essential and logical part of the general purpose of pacification. It was possible, indeed, to go farther and maintain that there could be no stable peace in southeastern Europe so long as the Slavs remained under Austrian domination.

The impossibility of reaching any arrangement with Austria was proved beyond peradventure by the conversations of General Smuts and Count Mensdorff, both of whom sought earnestly for a common ground of negotiation. A memorandum drafted by Count Czernin or under his supervision, indicated the utter futility of these or other conversations. A copy of the memorandum was given to House.

#### *Count Czernin's Memorandum*

'The Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs finds it difficult to believe that the declarations of the British messenger



[General Smuts] really tend towards a general peace based on justice, since they leave aside the only difficulty in the way of a just and lasting peace; e.g., the desire for annexation on the part of France and Italy.

‘The Central Empires will never recognize this desire, which appears to them unjustified. So long as Italy wishes to annex Austrian territory and France declares that she cannot make peace without acquiring Alsace-Lorraine, peace with these powers is impossible. If, however, they abandon their aims of conquest, the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs sees no obstacle to the conclusion of peace at once. So long as England supports her allies in their annexation schemes no one in the Central Empires will believe she seeks a just and lasting peace. The Central Empires have not the slightest desire to interfere with internal affairs in the Allied countries; neither do they wish others to interfere in theirs.

‘The Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs feels that the reproach with regard to the peace with Rumania is unjustified and the proof of this is that the Rumanian people wish for nothing more than the formation of a Margholiman Ministry such as will allow them to draw closely to the Central Powers in a profitable manner.<sup>1</sup> The Rumanian people feel that the benefits which a *rapprochement* will confer will be greater than the sacrifices which the peace imposes upon them.

‘As regards after war conditions Count Czernin declares he is resolutely determined to adhere to a programme which will aim at preventing future wars. But first the present war

<sup>1</sup> Nothing could more effectively stimulate distrust in the candor of Czernin than this paragraph. The peace imposed upon Rumania at Bucharest was one of ‘violence’ in the extreme; heavy economic penalties were laid upon Rumania, and a strip of territory seized along the old frontier which put Rumania absolutely at the mercy of Austria-Hungary. Czernin’s reference to the desire of the Rumanians for a *rapprochement* with the Central Empires suggests an ill-chosen touch of irony. Margholiman represented the pro-Teuton elements in Rumanian political circles.

must be brought to an end, which will only be possible when France and Italy no longer speak of conquest. It will be possible then to discuss the future.'

The peace offers of Austria were doubtless prompted in part by a vague hope of disturbing the diplomatic unity of the Allies, in part by a nervous anxiety to cast out feelers that might perchance lead to peace negotiations before the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire. They had merely passing interest and left no effects. It was quite otherwise with the diplomatic negotiations between the Central Powers and Russia, which were finally consummated early in March.

The Trotsky policy of 'no peace, no war,' which had led to the rupture of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, proved a magnificent gesture but little more. The German armies advanced steadily eastward, and on February 24 the Soviet Government, at the inspiration of Lenin, accepted conditions infinitely more drastic than those which they had previously refused. A new delegation, from which Trotsky was conspicuously absent, left for Brest and on March 3 signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

The effect in Germany and in Austria was an immediate revulsion of feeling in favor of the Governments. In Germany all parties, with the exception of the minority Socialists, supported the Berlin plan of erecting a chain of buffer vassal states along the eastern frontier of Germany and Austria-Hungary, at the expense of Russia. The success of the Government in its Russian policy, moreover, created a willingness to support the sacrifices of the spring battles, which according to the promises of the military leaders would force the Entente to recognize the futility of further fighting.

It was useless, then, for the United States or for the Allies to continue any emphasis upon the Wilsonian policy of making friends with the German opponents of German

imperialism. For the moment they were hypnotized by its diplomatic triumph at Brest-Litovsk. 'It will not be long,' wrote W. C. Bullitt, who was making a special study of the problem for Colonel House, 'before the President can again appeal to the German Socialists and Liberals. But to-day a scathing indictment of German policy in the East would serve merely to unify the people behind the Government. For the present, therefore, we had better fight and say nothing.'

## APPENDIX

*The Emperor Karl to the King of Spain*

[Telegram]

February 20, 1918

The European situation has been materially cleared by President Wilson's speech on the one hand and by Count Czernin's on the other and the points at issue have been reduced to a certain minimum; hence the time seems to have come when a direct discussion between one of my representatives and one representing Mr. Wilson might clear up the situation to such an extent that no further obstacle would stand in the way of a World's peace congress.

Your magnanimous desire so frequently expressed to pronounce proposals for peace prompts me to request you to forward the following message through a secret channel to President Wilson.

'In his speech of February 12th President Wilson expressed four main principles as the foundation of an understanding to be hoped for. My position in regard to these four principles can be summed up as follows:

'In point one President Wilson demands, according to the German text before me, "that each part of the final settlement must be based on the essential justice of that particular case and upon such adjustments as are most likely to bring about a peace that will be permanent." With this guiding principle I am in agreement. Every man of principle and intellect must desire a solution which assures a lasting peace and it is only a just peace, securing vital interests, that can afford such a solution.

'Points two and three belong together and are to the effect that "peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were chattels and pawns in a game, even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power, but that every territorial settlement involved in the war must be made in the interest and for the benefit of the populations concerned and not as a part of any adjustment or compromise of claims among the rival states."

'The question of territory I believe will resolve itself very simply if all governments expressly declare that they renounce conquests and annexations. Of course all states would have to be placed on the same footing.



If the President will endeavor to bring his allies into line in this respect, Austria will do everything in her power to induce her own allies to take up this position. As regards what might be accomplished in respect of possible frontier modifications in the interest and in favor of the peoples concerned similar friendly conversations may be carried on between state and state for, and this seemed to be the opinion of the President too, a lasting peace could scarcely be promoted if in a desire to avoid a forcible transference from the sovereignty of one power to another we wished to prevent a corresponding territorial settlement in other parts of Europe where hitherto there has been no fixity of frontiers as in the case of the parts inhabited by Bulgars. However the principle must remain that no state shall gain or lose anything and the pre-war possessions of all states be regarded as inviolable.

‘Point Four. “All well defined national aspirations shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded to them without introducing new or perpetuating old elements of discord and antagonism that would be likely in time to break the peace of Europe and consequently of the world.”

‘This statement too, so clearly and aptly put by the President, is acceptable as a basis. Again I lay the greatest stress on the fact that any fresh settlement of conditions in Europe should not increase the risk of future conflict, but rather diminish it. The President’s sincerity in saying “that the American Government was quite ready to be shown that the settlements she has suggested are not the best or the most enduring,” arouses in us a high hope that we may in this question too reach some agreement. In this exchange of opinion we shall be in a position to furnish conclusive proof that there are national demands the satisfying of which would be neither good nor enduring nor would they provide for the grievances which are continually put forward, a solution which would meet the wishes of the states affected. We shall be able to establish this in case of the national claims of Italy to the part of the Austrian Tyrol inhabited by Italians by means of the proof of indisputable manifestations and expressions of the popular will in this part of the country. I must therefore for my part most strongly urge that my representative discuss with the President every possible means of preventing fresh crises. In the principle already enunciated of an entire renunciation of annexations the demand of the complete surrender of Belgium is apparently included. All questions of detail such as Serbia’s access to the sea, the granting of the necessary commerce and navigation outlets for Serbia and many other questions could be certainly cleared up by discussion and prepared for a peace conference.

‘The second main principle which the President had already established is the unconditional avoidance of a future war; with this I am in complete accord.

‘As regards the third point laid down by the President, the main purpose of which is general disarmament and freedom of the seas for the prevention of future world wars, there is no difference of opinion between the President and myself. In view of all this I hold that there exists such a degree of harmony between the principles laid down by the President



on the one hand, and myself on the other, that results might be expected from an actual conference and that such a conference might bring the world considerably nearer to the peace fervently desired by all the states.'

If you will be kind enough to forward this to the President I believe you will render the cause of peace in general and the whole human race the greatest service.

KARL

*M. André Chéradame to Colonel House*

*February, 1918*

COLONEL:

Having kept a special memory of the kindly welcome you were good enough to give me during your stay in Paris, allow me to send you herewith a cutting from a Vienna newspaper, reproduced this morning by one of our great Paris journals, which refers to a particularly important point to which I draw your careful attention. It is clearly evident from the text that Czernin's recent rhetorical manifestations were but pacifist manœuvres resulting from a very close understanding with Berlin. This is a fact which has never been doubted by those who, like myself, have studied Austria and the Government at Vienna at close range during the last ten years.

As is recorded by the Vienna newspaper, the Government at Vienna has developed its pacific offensive 'with remarkable success.' This is unfortunately true. The recent declarations of Entente statesmen which it has been possible to interpret as favouring the preservation of Austria-Hungary, have encouraged the audacity of our adversaries who respect nothing save force, and whose already immeasurable ambitions are only whetted by any concession. Furthermore these declarations have been the cause of an undeniable moral depression on the part of the Allies of Western Europe and of the Slav and Latin peoples oppressed by Austria-Hungary. It would be highly desirable that the people of the United States should be assured that those who, like myself, preach the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary as indispensable, do not dream for a moment of seeing constituted in the place of Austria-Hungary a swarm of small States, too small to be able to exist comfortably.

As a matter of fact it is possible to conceive that states such as Bohemia, Yugo-Slavia, a democratized Magyar State, whilst they would each remain politically independent, should come to an understanding to form one economic territory, as it is to their interest to do so. The term 'Austria-Hungary' in reality denotes, not a nation, for such does not exist, but a system of States based on the oppression of nationalities. Also if the hypothetical idea is put about the United States that Austria-Hungary must be maintained, in Europe it is considered as an opinion in sharp contradiction with the principle proclaimed by President Wilson that all peoples should be free to dispose of themselves. One fact proves how dangerous it is to believe that the Government of Vienna differs from that at Berlin. The greatest harm that has been done in the last weeks is the result of the visit of a member of the British Government, General

Smuts, a Boer general who knows nothing about Austria-Hungary, and who, nevertheless went to Berne to start conversations with regard to a separate peace with Austria-Hungary. These conversations had, naturally, no chance of success, but they were immediately used by the people at Vienna and at Berlin to depress the morale of the Slav and Latin populations of Austria-Hungary, by telling them that Allies have betrayed them. Moreover, steps such as those taken by General Smuts, which are in open contradiction with the pact of London, are of a nature to imperil the trust which should exist amongst allies. And, evidently, this trust must be preserved intact.

For the same reasons it would be infinitely dangerous that the plan put forward by Allied Socialists to hold an International Conference should bear fruit. In reality, this decision could but decide the destruction of Allied moral resistance on the Western Front. The discussion about Stockholm contributed in a considerable proportion to Russia's dissolution. That experience should carry the conviction that the same mistakes should not be repeated in a scarcely different form. We therefore count upon President Wilson yet to render the Allied cause the immense service of putting aside this redoubtable trap. I will be particularly happy, Colonel, if you will be kind enough to transmit to the President these various points of view, in so far as you consider it useful to do so. I believe them to be absolutely true, because the events justify them. And I am convinced that truth is indispensable to victory.

Please receive, Colonel, the assurances of my very high consideration.

ANDRÉ CHÉRADAME

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE RUSSIAN ENIGMA<sup>1</sup>

I have been sweating blood over the question what is right and feasible to do in Russia. It goes to pieces like quicksilver under my touch. . . .  
*President Wilson to Colonel House, July 8, 1918*

#### I

THE advent of the Bolsheviks to power in Russia was destined in the end to bring difficulties upon Germany, since the contagion of social rebellion soon touched the German troops on the Western Front.<sup>2</sup> But for the moment the pacifist determination of the Soviet leaders was translated into immediate German profit at Brest-Litovsk and enabled Germany to concentrate her military effort in the West. To the Allies, many of whom assumed that the Bolshevik revolution was the work of German propaganda, it seemed of the first importance to reconstruct the Eastern Front by sending in an expeditionary force which might serve as focus for the mobilization of anti-German elements in Russia. They tended to underestimate the essential factors that had compelled Russia to make peace and they believed that with Allied assistance a fighting front could be reestablished and the Bolsheviks overthrown.

The French were the most vigorous in their demand for military intervention in Russia. They raised the problem at various times during the Interallied Conference at Paris

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is not designed to be a sketch of American policy in the Far East at this time, but merely to throw light on the situation as it was viewed by Colonel House. Among his papers are a mass of documents relating to the Siberian expedition; but since he was not in as close relationship with the statesmen and events of the Far East as he was with those of Europe, his papers do not reflect the history and policies of the war period so completely for the Far East as for American relations with Europe.

<sup>2</sup> *Ludendorff's Own Story*, II, 331, 334, and *passim*.

in late 1917. On December 1, Clemenceau discussed with House the possibilities of intervention and urged upon him the desirability of a Japanese expeditionary force. Previous to the revolution, he said, the old Russian Government had been unwilling to solicit Japanese military aid. But Russia's withdrawal, after the Bolshevik revolution, had changed the situation. Russia was out of the game. It was the moment for Japan to take her place.

Colonel House was then and always opposed to military intervention in Russia. He did not believe that a Japanese expedition or any other would serve to build up a new fighting front against Germany in the East. The fighting spirit of Russia, he insisted, was burnt out; the industrial organization of the country, so necessary to continued war, was shattered. The Bolsheviks were in control, not because of German gold, but because they had satisfied the only real demand of the Russian peasants: the distribution of land. This argument he based upon the reports he received from the American Red Cross Mission, supported by those of the British Consulate in Moscow. The following is typical:

*Mr. Arthur Bullard to Colonel House*

PETROGRAD, *December 12, 1917*

MY DEAR COLONEL HOUSE:

. . . It is no use crying over spilt milk. But I think there was a chance — months ago — to illumine a fighting spirit in the Russian army. If the soldier had been promised his land, if he had been made to believe that continued fighting meant the defense of the Revolution, if the real democratic idealism of the allied nations had not been hidden by the diplomatic rebuff to the Russian demand for a frank statement of war aims, the miracle might have been accomplished. But the Provisional Government and Kerenski were doomed because they refused to meet these two burning issues of the



people — 'Land and peace' — and contented themselves with busy activity in the political combinations of Petrograd.

It was inevitable that some party should arise that would try to meet the popular demands. It might have been any one of the half-dozen so-called political parties. It happened to be the Bolsheviki, because they had the men of sufficient daring to cut all the Gordian knots, to meet the real issues frankly, daringly, unscrupulously. . . .

Cordially

A. BULLARD

If Russia were both unwilling and unable to stay in the war it would be useless to attempt to force her by means of an expeditionary force, and it would be very costly at a time when the Allies needed all their man-power for the coming struggle in the West. Any attempt to interfere in Russian politics, apart from the moral issues involved, might prove exceedingly dangerous. What chance was there to oust the Bolsheviks, who appeared to the peace-hungry and land-hungry Russians as the first leaders who had made a sincere effort to satisfy their needs? Would not such interference merely strengthen the control of Lenin and Trotsky? Was it, indeed, certain that if the Bolsheviks were overthrown they would be replaced by a party able better to withstand the Germans? Trotsky showed no inclination to be tricked by Berlin or to make any proposal which would be of direct aid to Germany.

House concluded that, so far as the United States was concerned, any effort at intervention, except at the request of the Russian Government, would be a mistake. He so advised Wilson on his return from Europe in December, at the same time urging that the President declare American friendliness to Russia and provide whatever help the Russians might ask.

'André Tardieu and Thomas W. Lamont called,' wrote

House on January 2, 1918. 'Tardieu has just returned from France and desired to get in touch with the situation on this side. Lamont came to tell of Russia and of Thompson's work there.<sup>1</sup> He found I was in partial agreement with Thompson and therefore in disagreement with the English, French, and American Governments regarding the policy that should be adopted toward Russia at this time. God only knows who is right, but, at least, I feel that I am on the safe side when I advise that literally nothing be done further than that an expression of sympathy be offered for Russia's efforts to weld herself into a virile democracy, and to proffer our financial, industrial, and moral support in every way possible.'

A week later the President delivered his speech of the Fourteen Points, in which he included a special appeal for Russia, conceived in the friendliest spirit of aid and breathing no reproaches, either against the Bolsheviki or the Russian people for their withdrawal from the war against Germany. So far as Russia was concerned, the effects of the speech were not what House had hoped. Trotsky was engaged in his paradoxical plan to cease war without making peace with Germany, and it does not appear that at this moment he put faith in Wilson's professions of help; still less Lenin. Between the bourgeois capitalistic republic of the West and the communistic revolution of the East there could be little sympathy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel William B. Thompson had been Chief of the American Red Cross Mission in Russia.

<sup>2</sup> Radek, the propagandist of the Bolsheviki, later spoke of the Fourteen Points as 'a very deliquescent programme of political rascality' and termed Wilson the 'prophet of American imperialism.' Cf. the following letter written to Colonel House by Lincoln Steffens, February 1, 1919: '... One clog in your peace machinery is the failure of Trotzky and the Russians to believe in the sincerity of President Wilson. I understand their reasoning. I used to hear them say, even in my day (last spring) that what the President said was what they, the Russians, thought; but they argued as hard-headed Socialists along the line of economic determination; to wit, the United States is not a democracy. It is a plutocracy; it is a part of the capitalistic system. Therefore the head of it can't mean literally what Mr. Wilson says. He must be playing some game....'

## II

In the mean time the Allies decided to press their plans for Japanese intervention in Siberia, partly on the ground that elements in the Far East might be organized against the Bolsheviks and 'therefore against Germany,' partly to protect the military stores of the Allies at Vladivostok. The coöperation of the United States Government in these plans was obviously desirable and Mr. Balfour cabled to Colonel House, for transmission to the President, an exposition of the factors which had led to the decision.

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *January 30, 1918*

Instructions have been sent, by telegraph, to Colville Barclay to urge that Japan shall be asked by the Allies to occupy the Siberian Railway as their mandatory. I hope the scheme will receive very careful consideration in spite of the many serious difficulties it presents. . . . At first sight the occupation of the Siberian Railway may appear inconsistent with due respect for the rights of the Government now at the head of affairs at Petrograd. We do not wish to quarrel with the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, we look at them with a certain degree of favour so long as they refuse to make a separate peace. But their claim to be the Government of all the Russians, either *de facto* or *de jure*, is not founded on fact. The forced dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, in particular, makes their claim no better than that of the autonomous bodies in South East Russia which the occupation of the Siberian Railway is intended to assist; while there is much less probability of their helping to defend the Rumanian army, to repeal attacks on Armenia by Turkey and of their refusing to furnish supplies to the Germans. . . .

I trust you will not mind my putting these considerations

before you, but the question is regarded as one of great military importance by the Cabinet. You will realize that [it] is also one of immediate urgency.

BALFOUR

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, *February 2, 1918*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

I have never changed my opinion that it would be a great political mistake to send the Japanese troops into Siberia. There is no military advantage that I can think of that would offset the harm. Leaving out the ill feeling which it would create in the Bolsheviki Government, it would arouse the Slavs throughout Europe because of the race question if for nothing else. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

The President was quite as strongly opposed to the suggested Japanese expedition as House. It is likely that he believed, on what the State Department regarded as solid evidence, that the Japanese themselves were the instigators of the plan for an invasion of Siberia; and they wished the expedition to be exclusively or overwhelmingly Japanese in order to ensure an occupation of the Maritime Provinces.

Such a development Mr. Wilson constantly endeavored to forestall, and this determination on his part underlay American policy as regards the Far East, a policy warmly endorsed both by the Department of State and by the military leaders. But the European Allies constantly urged Japanese intervention. Late in February Wilson took up with House the conditions under which he might safely approve it.

‘*February 25, 1918*: We discussed at great length,’ House wrote in his diary, ‘the question of Japanese intervention in



Siberia, but came to no conclusion. There are arguments both for and against it. My thought was that unless Japan went in under a promise to withdraw, or at least be subject to the disposition of the peace conference, the Entente in backing her would place themselves in exactly the same position as the Germans now occupied toward Western Russia, to which there is such vociferous objection among the Western Powers.'

Under continual pressure from the French and the British, President Wilson wrote a memorandum in which he withdrew his objections to the Allied note requesting Japanese intervention, although he did not go so far as to join with the Allies in making the request.<sup>1</sup> The note was not formally circulated, but its contents were pretty generally known to the Allied Ambassadors. Colonel House, who may have weakened in his opposition to Japanese intervention during his discussions with the President at Washington, continued to emphasize the difficulties involved in the Allied proposition, especially after a conversation with Ambassador Bakhmetieff. 'The Russian Ambassador,' he wrote on March 2, in New York, 'desired to call my attention to the danger of the Japanese expeditionary force into Siberia. He thought it would throw the Russians into the arms of the Germans for, between the two, there would be no question as to which they would choose. We did not disagree upon this position.'

*Colonel House to the President*

[Memorandum] <sup>2</sup>

March 3, 1918

1. I think it is necessary under the circumstances for the note to go to the Japanese, but before it is sent the Allied

<sup>1</sup> The text of this note is printed in the appendix to this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Transmitted by telephone.

Ambassadors should be called together and it should be pointed out where this venture may lead.

(a) The lowering, or even loss, of our moral position, which will undoubtedly have the effect of dulling the enthusiasm of our people for the war, in exchange for a vague and nebulous military advantage.

(b) Suggest that at the same time this statement is delivered to the Japanese they should be requested to make a statement of their reasons for this action and policy in regard to Siberia. This statement should be made along the lines of the President's note so that their position may be favorably contrasted in the eyes of the world with that of Germany.

2. Does he [the President] not think it would be well for me to cable Balfour fully outlining the difficulties and dangers as we see them?

3. The Japanese have already approached the British inquiring whether the holding back of the Americans was antagonistic to Japan. They were assured that it was not. However, this indicates the necessity for caution and our press should be warned not to write inflammatory articles.

NEW YORK, *March 3, 1918*

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Senator Root has just left. He agrees with you and with me as to the danger of the proposed Japanese intervention in Siberia. He thinks that even if Japan should announce her purpose to retire when the war was over, or at the mandate of the peace conference, the racial dislike which the Russians have for the Japanese would throw Russia into the arms of Germany.

The Russian Ambassador, whom I saw yesterday, is of a like opinion.

We are treading upon exceedingly delicate and dangerous ground, and are likely to lose that fine moral position you have given the Entente cause. The whole structure which

you have built up so carefully may be destroyed over night, and our position will be no better than that of the Germans.

I cannot understand the . . . determination of the British and French to urge the Japanese to take such a step. Leaving out the loss of moral advantage, it is doubtful whether there will be any material gain. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

*Colonel House to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, *March 4, 1918*

I have told the President that I am cabling you because I feel that the proposed Japanese action in Siberia may be the greatest misfortune that has yet befallen the Allies. This is said with the kindest feelings for Japan and no desire to question her position in Far-Eastern affairs. The United States wishes in every way to assist, and in no way to obstruct, this scheme, but it would be entirely unfair not to warn you of the dangers of the plan so far as public opinion in the United States is concerned.

Since the proposals have been made semi-public, I have sounded various shades of opinion here, and find them almost unanimous in their verdict; even so conservative a statesman as Root considers it would be a grave mistake. However altruistic the intentions of the Japanese may really be, they will be misrepresented by German propaganda everywhere. They will endeavor to show that the Allies, through the Japanese, are doing in Siberia exactly what the Germans are doing in the West; that the Siberian case is even worse because the Japanese have not been invited to come by any Russian body; that Japanese territory is not threatened as the Germans and Austrians claim theirs to be. The race question, in particular, will be sharply emphasized and an attempt made to show that we are using a yellow race to

destroy a white one. This may result in the American press and public opinion getting out of hand, and adopting an attitude which will be resented in Japan and cause serious friction between the two peoples.

I feel this action will mean a serious lowering, if not actual loss, of our moral position in the eyes of our own peoples and of the whole world, and a dulling of the high enthusiasm of the American people for a righteous cause. Unless we maintain our moral position we must expect a very formidable anti-war party here, a general weakening of the war effort, and a breaking-up of that practically unanimous support upon which the Administration can now count.

The President has agreed to send a note to the Japanese Government associating himself with the Notes of the Allies,<sup>1</sup> but he would still like you to consider whether something cannot be done which will prevent part at any rate of the misrepresentations of the German propaganda from bearing fruit.

It will probably be suggested to the Allied Ambassadors that the Japanese Government, when they receive their mandate, should be requested to make a public announcement to the effect that they are sending an armed force into Siberia only as an ally of Russia, and for the purpose of saving Siberia from the invasion and intrigues of Germany; that they will be willing to leave the settlement of all Siberian questions to the council of peace.

EDWARD HOUSE

Following the receipt of House's memorandum and letter, President Wilson decided to withdraw the first memorandum and constructed another. In the original note, while declining to associate himself formally with the Allied request for

<sup>1</sup> The President's first note did not formally associate the United States Government with the notes of the Allies; it merely stated that the Government had no objection to the request being made of Japan.



Japanese intervention, he expressed confidence in the motives that lay behind such intervention. In the note finally sent, however, he laid primary stress on the unwisdom of any intervention. Colonel House commented as follows in his diary:

*'March 5, 1918: The President called for Polk this morning and handed him a new note to Japan which was to be substituted for the one written the other day and later held up. I agree with what the President says in this last note. . . . Polk and I had a long argument over the telephone about the matter after he had seen the President. However unfortunate it may be that the State Department had given the substance of the first note to the Japanese and Allied Ambassadors, nevertheless I believe the President was wise in changing it and substituting the note written yesterday.'*<sup>1</sup> . . .

### III

President Wilson's objections to Japanese intervention in Siberia did not alter the opinion of Allied leaders in Europe that it was both desirable and necessary. When on March 4 the Bolsheviks, under German military pressure, signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, it became apparent that Bolshevik resistance to Germany was at an end. The Allies therefore pressed again for American approval of the Japanese expedition, emphasizing the plea that the Japanese would appear in Siberia not as invaders, but as representatives of the Allied armies helping Russia to throw off German domination.

<sup>1</sup> This second note is printed in the appendix to this chapter.



ROBERT LANSING  
BRAND WHITLOCK

ARTHUR HUGH FRAZIER

FRANK L. POLK  
SIDNEY E. MEZES



*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, March 6, 1918

I am grateful for your telegram of the 4th March, and much appreciate the frank exposition of your views which it contains.

Up to the moment when the Bolshevik Government decided to accept the German peace terms, I was opposed to Japanese intervention, as I hoped Bolshevik resistance to German aggression might continue.

When the Bolsheviks surrendered unconditionally, it became of the utmost importance to prevent the rich supplies in Siberia from falling into German hands, and the only method by which this could be secured was by Japanese intervention on a considerable scale. Information reached us that Japanese Government were making preparations to take action in Eastern Siberia, while, owing to the public discussion of the question, it seemed likely that considerable resentment would be aroused in Japan if, the Japanese Government being willing to act on behalf of the Allies, a mandate were refused. The formidable pro-German party in Japan would have asserted that such a refusal was due to mistrust, and I fear that, however erroneous in fact, this sentiment would have predominated in Japanese opinion.

I need hardly emphasize the advantage to be gained by substituting for Japanese action alone and in her own interests, action as mandatory of the Allied Powers. I am in full agreement with the proposals made in the last paragraph of your telegram; I sent to our Ambassador in duplicate on March 4th a telegram following these lines. This telegram was repeated to Lord Reading and I am telling him to send a copy to Sir William Wiseman immediately for your information.

Although reports have reached us that enemy prisoners



in Siberia are being armed under Bolshevik instructions, yet the Bolshevik Government assert that they still intend to organize resistance to German aggression in spite of having signed a peace treaty. I have therefore telegraphed our agent to suggest to the Bolshevik Government that they should invite Japanese and Rumanian coöperation for this purpose. I fear, however, that there is little chance of the proposal being entertained, nor do I know how the Japanese and Rumanian Governments would regard such an appeal.

I have done this so that we can put ourselves right with public opinion, if and when a statement is made on the whole subject.

I hope and believe that the action which has been taken, and which will, I feel sure, meet with the President's approval, will enable us to justify completely the intervention which we are asking Japan to undertake.

It will show that the Allies have been actuated by no selfish or mean motives, and if Japan consents to undertake the obligation on such terms, might not it contribute to allay the suspicion which exists in many quarters both here and in the United States?

BALFOUR

Colonel House remained firm in his impression that the landing of Japanese troops in Siberia would accomplish, as nothing else could, the complete antagonism of the Bolsheviks against the Entente and would throw them into the arms of Germany. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk had yet to be ratified by the Soviet Congress, which was even then about to assemble at Moscow. A message of friendship to the Soviets and a promise of aid might help to induce the Congress to refuse ratification.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, March 10, 1918

DEAR GOVERNOR:

What would you think of sending a reassuring message to Russia when the Soviet meets at Moscow on the 12th?

Our proverbial friendship for Russia could be reaffirmed and you could declare our purpose to help in her efforts to weld herself into a democracy. She should be left free from any sinister or selfish influence which might interfere with such development.

My thought is not so much about Russia as it is to seize this opportunity to clear up the Far-Eastern situation but without mentioning it or Japan in any way. What you would say about Russia and against Germany could be made to apply to Japan or any other power seeking to do what we know Germany is attempting.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Such a message might prove especially timely, inasmuch as Trotsky, probably in all sincerity but perhaps without the full approval of Lenin, laid before Raymond Robins, then Chief of the American Red Cross in Russia, a proposal intimating his willingness to prevent the ratification of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Trotsky asked if the Treaty were not ratified or if the Soviet renewed hostilities, whether the Bolsheviks could count on Allied aid, what sort it would be; and, if Japan should threaten to intervene in Siberia, what steps would be taken by the Allies and the United States to prevent a landing.

To this proposal, which was cabled to London by the British Commissioner, Lockhart, with a recommendation that a cordial reply be sent, the British Government made no immediate response. President Wilson's message dated March 11, in line with House's letter of March 10, did not

affect the situation.<sup>1</sup> He expressed sympathy with Russia at the moment when 'the German power has been thrust in to interrupt and turn back the whole struggle for freedom.' But he confessed that the United States was not 'now in a position to render the direct and effective aid it would wish to render.' On March 16 the Congress of Soviets ratified the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. At the same time it passed a resolution in response to Wilson's message, conceived in anything but a friendly spirit, and expressing the belief that 'the happy time is not far distant when the laboring masses of all countries will throw off the yoke of capitalism.' Zinoviev is said to have boasted: 'We slapped the President of the United States in the face.'<sup>2</sup>

The surrender of the Bolsheviks to Germany convinced the French that the plan of Japanese intervention should be pushed through, and at the meeting of the Supreme War Council at London, on March 16, both Clemenceau and Pichon argued strongly that a joint note should be sent President Wilson asking for American coöperation. Mr. Balfour, who was in close touch with the American situation and point of view and always preserved an open mind on the domestic situation in Russia, admitted that the advices which his Government had received from Russia were against intervention. Lockhart, who was intimate with Trotsky at this time, had reported that a Japanese expedition would throw all of Russia into the hands of Germany; he insisted that Trotsky really wanted a working arrangement with the Allies, and both Balfour and Lloyd George advocated delay in the announcement of Japanese intervention, perhaps in the hope that an invitation for Japanese help might ultimately come from the Bolsheviks themselves. But the French and Italians demanded immediate action,

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter for Wilson's Message and the Soviet response.

<sup>2</sup> Francis, *Russia from the American Embassy*, 230.

and it was agreed that a new appeal should be sent to Wilson. On March 18 Colonel House, who was ill in New York, noted in his diary:

‘Lord Reading has received a cable from his Government urging him to again press the Japanese intervention plan. I sent a message to the President through Gordon, saying I had not changed my opinion in that matter. I asked Wiseman, after reading Reading’s interview with the President, what the President had told him. He replied that the President said, “I have not changed my mind.”’

*Colonel House to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, *March 29, 1918*

I have discussed the matter with the President and he hopes that nothing will be done for the moment because the situation is so uncertain.

There seems no need for immediate action and the situation might possibly clear itself a little later so we would know better what to do.

EDWARD HOUSE

As among France, Great Britain, and the United States, there were thus three opinions as to the course to pursue. The French, distrustful of the Bolsheviks to the point of clear-cut hostility, advocated Japanese intervention without delay. The British recognized the advantages of intervention as rather outweighing its disadvantages, but were willing to work with Trotsky if it were feasible, and hoped that perhaps ultimately the Bolsheviks through Lockhart might ask for intervention. The United States Government believed that intervention, unless definitely demanded by the Bolsheviks, would prove useless and perhaps disastrous.



The British and American points of view were not far separated; ultimately a plan was evolved and agreement reached.

## IV

The compromise which the British Foreign Office suggested was to substitute for Japanese intervention an interallied expedition, in which the United States should play a prominent part. The objections of the Bolsheviks to intervention in Siberia had arisen in part from anti-Japanese feeling. They feared that it meant permanent Japanese control of eastern Siberia, a fear which was intensified by racial prejudice. They had raised no serious difficulties following the Allied expedition to Murmansk, and it was possible that they might even ask for intervention in the East if it were given an interallied character. On March 26 Wiseman received a telegram from the Foreign Office, instructing him to consult Colonel House confidentially as to whether such a suggestion would cause embarrassment at Washington. If not, the Allies would again take up with Tokyo the question of an interallied expedition, for which the Japanese had earlier expressed some distaste.

House agreed that many of the disadvantages of intervention would disappear if it could be put upon an interallied basis; they might all disappear if an invitation could be secured from Trotsky, for which Lockhart was working and for which, Balfour intimated in a telegram of April 3, Robins also should be instructed to work. At House's suggestion Wiseman was sent to England to explain the Washington point of view and bring back to Reading his impressions of the European situation. In the mean time the plan of interallied intervention was developed.

'The [British] Ambassador,' wrote House on April 24, 'had an extensive budget to go through with me. The most pressing matter was Russia. His Government believe that

it is possible now to get Trotsky and his associates to agree to an understanding by which the Allies could send a force into Russia and compel Germany to re-form an army on the Eastern Front. He seemed gratified to learn that I thoroughly endorsed the plan which Mr. Balfour outlined in a very long cable.'

It was all the more difficult for Wilson to hold to his refusal to consider intervention in Russia, because of the military situation in France. Since March 21 the victorious German offensive had been proceeding, and it was of the first importance that no more reënforcements should reach the Western Front. Furthermore, there was no hope of completely defeating Germany, even if the Allies held firm in France, so long as she was able to exploit Russia through the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. All this Lord Reading laid before House, together with Mr. Balfour's recommendations to the effect that an Allied front be reestablished in Russia, through an interallied military expedition. Extended comments were added in a cablegram from Wiseman.<sup>1</sup>

### *House's Notes of British Statement on Russia*

'The British War Cabinet have now further considered the general military problem before the Allies, and have reached the conclusion that it is essential to treat Europe and Asia, for the purposes of strategy, though not of command, as a single front. The transfer of German divisions from East to West is still continuing and, under present conditions, can be further continued, and it is imperative to stop this movement if it can possibly be done.

'Germany can now draw food and raw materials from Asia, and in these conditions, even if our defensive is successful, there is little chance that we could make a successful

<sup>1</sup> See appendix to this chapter.

offensive. In the present state of affairs we cannot hope for a favorable change in internal conditions in Germany and for this reason also it is important that pressure should be brought on the Central Powers from the East.

‘It must further be remembered that Germany is now trying to sow disorder throughout the East, and that German agents are already attempting to cause trouble in Afghanistan, Persia and Turkestan. This movement will have important effects unless it can be checked.

‘It thus becomes of the greatest urgency to reëstablish an Allied front in Russia, and the only hope of doing this appears to be by producing a national revival of Russia, such as that which was seen in the time of Napoleon.<sup>1</sup> Russia has an immense supply of soldiers trained to arms, and with experience of modern warfare, including capable generals, and if the necessary spirit could be aroused, an effective army could in a short time be produced, and supplied from the stores now at Russian ports. The Germans would then be compelled either to withdraw or strengthen their forces in Russia.

‘The British Government considers that it is necessary for the Allies to unite in order to bring about a Russian national revival, and in order to adopt a policy of freeing Russia from foreign control by means of Allied intervention. The Allies must, of course, avoid taking sides in Russian politics, and, if the Bolshevist Government will coöperate in resisting Germany, it seems necessary to act with them as the *de facto* Russian Government. Trotsky, at least, has for some time shown signs of recognizing that coöperation with the Allies is the only hope of freeing Russia from the Germans, and, whatever his motives, he has taken steps against anti-Ally newspapers and has asked for coöperation at Murmansk, and on other matters. He has now definitely asked

<sup>1</sup> The suggestion of a national revival indicates the limited extent of Allied knowledge of actual conditions in Russia at this time.



for a statement of the help which the Allies could give, and of the guarantee which they would furnish, and says that he considers an agreement desirable if the conditions are satisfactory. The British Government are of opinion that the Allies should avail themselves of this opportunity to offer Allied intervention against Germany, accompanied by a suitable declaration of disinterestedness and by proper guarantees as to the evacuation of Russian territory. If such an offer was accepted the whole position might be transformed, and if it was refused, the position of the Bolshevik Government would at least be defined.

‘Japan would clearly have to furnish the greater part of any considerable military force which might be used, but it is desirable that all the Allies should participate.

‘The intervention of Japan alone clearly might throw a large proportion of the Russian population onto the side of Germany, and we can therefore only offer an intervention by all the Allies, Japan providing the greatest military strength. The British Government would be ready to make a naval demonstration at Murmansk and elsewhere, which would provide rallying-points for anti-German forces and hold the ports as bases. The British could also give assistance to the Russian forces in trans-Caucasia if communication through Persia can be established, which will depend largely on the coöperation of the Bolsheviks in that region. The important step to be taken would, however, be an advance through Siberia by a force predominantly Japanese and American. The Allied character of this force would have to be furnished mainly from the United States, though British and probably also French and Italian detachments could accompany it. The American contingent might be composed mainly of technical corps, especially mechanical transports, signal units, railway troops, and medical units, and also one complete division. This force would probably have little or no fighting for some time after land-



ing, and the American division, if sent, could finish training in Siberia. A great quantity of war material now at the ports would be made available for refitting the Russian army.

‘The British War Cabinet are anxious to learn whether the President would be disposed to agree to the following course of action:

‘1. Great Britain and the United States to make a simultaneous proposal to the Bolshevist Government for intervention by the Allies on the lines indicated, an understanding to be given for the withdrawal of all Allied forces at the conclusion of hostilities.

‘2. An American force, composed as described above, to be sent to the Far East.

‘If this general policy is acceptable, the question of approaching the Japanese Government remains. Japan would under this scheme intervene in Siberia as part of a joint intervention by the Allies. The proposed declaration might not be very welcome to her, and it would probably be necessary for her to use her troops, in conjunction with Russian and Allied forces, in European Russia as well as in Asia. The British Government consider that Japan should, in return, have the military command of the expedition, though a Mission from each Allied country, including a strong propaganda detachment, would be attached. It also seems desirable that the proposal should be made to the Japanese at an early date and pressed on the ground that the proposed course of action is necessary for a victory of the Allied cause. . . .

‘The suggested plan is one of urgent importance. The proposals outlined above are in no way intended as an alternative to sending American infantry to Europe, the need for which is constantly increasing. The problem of Russia is one of pressing urgency and in the present situation it is essential to bring pressure against Germany in the

East, without delay. If this cannot be done, it is difficult to see how the blockade can be made effective or how peace is to be reached through a conclusive defeat of the enemy's forces.

'Before consulting the other Allied powers the British Government think the most important step is to ascertain whether the President concurs in these proposals, for without his concurrence the British Government would not care to proceed further with them.'

Such recommendations were reënforced by personal visits of numerous foreigners who came to press the Allied point of view upon President Wilson and who almost always stopped first at Magnolia for a conference with House. Their arguments were generally the same: that only by recreating a fighting front in the East could the German pressure in the West be diminished. They also asked for aid to the Czecho-Slovak divisions who were struggling across Asia, at times in conflict with irresponsible Russians, Hungarians, and Germans, at times with Bolsheviks. Their valorous anabasis won the admiration of the Allied world, and the demand was general that steps be taken to prevent their extermination.

On June 11, M. Marcel Delaney, French Ambassador to Japan, called on House. 'We discussed Japanese and Allied intervention in Russia and Siberia in its every phase.' M. Delaney carried a personal message from Clemenceau to Wilson, to the effect that the French Prime Minister 'considers intervention imperative not only because he believes it will be effective but because he believes it will stimulate the morale of the French people more than anything else, and that they need stimulating in this hour of trial. He [Delaney] declared the situation to be critical. The Germans are within forty miles of Paris in two different directions along two valley routes. The nearer they get to Paris, the

more air raids are possible and the harder it is to maintain the morale of the people.'

The next day Thomas G. Masaryk, President of the Czecho-Slovak Committee and later first President of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, took lunch with House to discuss Russia. 'Masaryk talked with more sense than most people with whom I have discussed the subject, and he knows Russia better.' A few days later it was Henri Bergson who stopped on his way to Washington to present the case for intervention to the President. Shortly afterwards House heard the other side from Louis Edgar Brown of the *Chicago News*, who had just returned from Petrograd. 'He takes an entirely different viewpoint of the Russian situation and of intervention from that of my recent visitors. He believes in both Lenin and Trotsky and thinks the Soviet Government will maintain itself. He considers the worst thing we can do is to intervene in any way, particularly in coöperation with Japanese troops. He thinks if we do this Russia will ask Germany to help her organize the Russian army to repel the invasion. It is difficult to come to a satisfactory judgment when one hears such conflicting views from intelligent men and those who have been on the ground for a long time. Brown has been in Russia for a year or more and comes hot-foot from there, having left Petrograd within the month.'

House was convinced that it was no longer possible simply to return a blank negative to Allied demands for intervention, and he pondered methods by which an Allied force could be introduced into Russia without arousing suspicion of imperialistic motives. After long discussions he decided that the only possible solution of the problem was the creation of an economic relief commission, which more than any other would win the welcome of the Russians themselves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Raymond Robins, who returned to the United States in May, advocated an economic commission and had elaborated with the Soviet leaders a scheme for the development of commercial relations.



It was possible that by thus subordinating the military aspects of intervention the confidence of the Russians might be secured. House was the more inclined to this plan because of the possibility of persuading Hoover to take charge of its execution. On June 13 he wrote in his diary:

‘Gordon telephoned last night suggesting that Hoover head a “Russian Relief Commission” as part of an intervention plan. The idea appealed to me strongly at once. This morning . . . we decided that he should go to Hoover and ask whether he would be willing to serve in that capacity. . . .

‘Hoover told Gordon he was willing to serve wherever the President thought he could do so best. He was enthusiastic over the suggestion and thought it the best solution of the Russian problem. We then mentioned the plan to Lansing, who greeted it with enthusiasm. . . .

‘Sir William is in favor of the plan and we agreed that he should intercept Reading at Princeton, where he goes tomorrow for a degree, tell him the story, and get him to coöperate with us in putting it through.’

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 13, 1918

DEAR GOVERNOR:

. . . I hope you will think well of the plan. . . . The Russians know Hoover and Hoover knows the East. If he heads ‘The Russian Relief Commission’ it will typify in the Russian mind what was done in Belgium, and I doubt whether any Government in Russia, friendly or unfriendly, would dare oppose his coming in. . . .

Hoover has ability as an organizer, his name will carry weight in the direction desired, and his appointment will, for the moment, settle the Russian question as far as it can be settled by you at present.



Some one has been here almost every day since I arrived, to talk about this vexatious problem and to try and get me to transmit their views to you. I have not done so because no good way out was presented. This plan, however, seems workable and I sincerely hope it will appeal to your judgment.

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

Four days later Mr. Hoover came from Washington to Magnolia to discuss the prospect of his being sent to Russia as the chief of the Russian Relief Commission. House's conviction of the necessity of taking some action of this kind was further intensified by a visit from the British Ambassador. Lord Reading laid before him the contents of a new cable from England analyzing the military situation. Colonel House's notes of the substance of the cable were as follows:

'1. Unless Allied intervention is undertaken in Siberia forthwith we have no chance of being ultimately victorious, and shall incur serious risk of defeat in the mean time.

'2. By the first of June, 1919, the exhaustion of British and French reserves of man-power will have necessitated a very serious reduction in the number of divisions that they can maintain in the field. The growth of the American army, even under the most favorable circumstances, will not suffice to equip, train, and place in the line enough divisions to restore the original balance in our favor. Thus the Germans, reckoning on a similar scale of battle casualties for them as for the Allies, will in the first half of 1919 still have a formidable army on the Western Front even without withdrawing any further divisions from the East.

'3. But if the Central Powers are not threatened by any military force in the East they will by that time be in a posi-

tion to withdraw from there many more divisions, still further increasing their superiority. In view of the unfavorable strategic situation of the Allied armies in France it is possible that the Germans might with this superiority obtain a decision in their favor in the West.

‘4. On the other hand, if intervention is started now it is estimated that by the spring of 1919 a sufficient Allied force could be deployed west of the Urals to rally to the Allied cause all those Russian elements which are in favor of law and order, good government and economical development, and which would render possible the reconstitution of democratic Russia as a military power.

‘5. The greater part of this force must for the time being be Japanese, as it would be strategically unsound to divert forces that can be used in the Western theater, except such small detachments of the other Allied Powers as are necessary to give the operation an international character.

‘In this manner, too, German troops would be held by an Allied force which would not otherwise be employed. Ultimately there may be a surplus of American troops over and above what can be maintained in France, and this should be used in support or in substitution of the Japanese.

‘6. The immediate effect of this force would be, first, to prevent the withdrawal of any further German troops from the East; second, to oblige them to withdraw divisions from the Western Front and thus give the Allies a real chance of obtaining a military success in the West even in 1919.

‘7. Finally, it is not considered that any military success which it is within the power of the Allies to obtain on the Western Front can be decisive enough to force the Central Powers to tear up the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, or to prevent Russia and most of Asia from becoming a German colony. The immense spaces at the enemy’s disposal for maneuver in the West and his superior communications would enable him to fight for an unlimited time without a decision being

obtained. Even if driven completely out of France, Belgium, and Italy, the Central Powers would be still unbeaten. Unless therefore Russia can reconstitute herself as a military power in the East against the time when the Allied armies are withdrawn, nothing can prevent the complete absorption of her resources by the Central Powers, which would imply world domination by Germany; the only means by which the resurrection of Russia can be brought about is by immediate Allied military intervention in that theater.

'8. *To sum up:*

'No military decision in the Allies' favor can ever be expected as the result of operations on the Western Front alone; nor will such a measure of equality as may be looked for in that theater in any way secure the objects for which the Allies are fighting, unless combined with the maximum military effort that can be made in the East.

'9. The matter is urgent not merely politically, but also because it is necessary to take advantage of the summer, which is rapidly passing away, and because the agricultural districts should be secured before the harvest is gathered in.'

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 21, 1918

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Lord Reading, who has been in Cambridge getting a degree, has spent the better part of the day with me. While here he received a cable from Balfour about Russian intervention. I suggested that he send you a copy for your information before he sees you, which he hopes to do on Monday. . . .

Neither Reading nor I agree to the statement that a decision is not possible on the Western Front. . . . The memorandum attached and which was drawn up by their repre-



sentative in Russia, together with the French Ambassador there, is worthy of notice.

I believe something must be done immediately about Russia, otherwise it will become the prey of Germany. It has become now a question of days rather than months. I have this to suggest and recommend:

Make an address to Congress setting forth the food situation in this country; telling of the speeding-up of our food products in one year's time to a point where after August it will not be necessary for the Allies to continue on rations except as to beef and sugar. This statement in itself will enormously stimulate the morale in France, England, and Italy, and correspondingly depress that of the Central Powers.

Hoover has planned to make this statement himself in London around the middle of July. . . .

Then set forth your plan for sending a 'Russian Relief Commission' headed by Hoover with the purpose of helping Russia speed up her food production by the same methods we have used. While this is being done the Commission to be instructed to coördinate all such relief organizations as the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., etc., etc., and supply the Russian people with agricultural implements necessary to make their potential arable lands as productive as ours and with a like beneficent result.

To do this it would be necessary for the Relief Commission and their assistants to have a safe and orderly field to work in and you have therefore asked the coöperation and assistance of England, France, Italy, and Japan, which they have generously promised, and they have also given the United States the assurance that they will not either now or in the future interfere with Russia's political affairs or encroach in any way upon her territorial integrity.

This programme will place the Russian and Eastern situation in your hands and will satisfy the Allies and perhaps



reconcile the greater part of Russia towards this kind of intervention.

Lord Reading is enthusiastic over this plan and I asked him to discuss it with you when you receive him. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

*Lord Robert Cecil to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

July 8, 1918

You were good enough to tell me when you were over here last year that I might communicate with you, if there were anything which I thought you ought to know. May I venture therefore to say this?

I am convinced that there is growing up in this country a very strong feeling that Allied intervention in Siberia is being unduly delayed. So far public expression of opinion on the subject has been strongly discouraged by the Government. Till lately the newspapers have been warned not to discuss it, and even now they have been asked to treat it with great caution. Attempts to raise matter in Parliament have been prevented. But I am afraid that sooner or later feeling will become too strong to be repressed and a dangerous explosion may follow which might produce very unwelcome results, possibly even giving rise to international criticism and recrimination. From one point of view these are matters with which you may rightly say you have no concern. But knowing how very much you have at heart the maintenance and increase of cordial friendship between our two countries, I thought you would forgive me if I let you know how the situation strikes one, part of whose business it is to watch public opinion and who has given very close personal attention to this particular question for the last six months.

ROBERT CECIL

## v

President Wilson, obviously against his inclination and judgment, was forced to consider how the plan of intervention could be carried through; he insisted that, since Russia refused to ask for intervention, it must not appear to injure the sovereign rights of Russia. I have been sweating blood, he wrote to House on July 8, over the question what is right and feasible to do in Russia. It goes to pieces like quicksilver under my touch, but I hope I see and can report some progress presently along the double line of economic assistance and aid to the Czecho-Slovaks.<sup>1</sup> If House had been more persistent than usual in pressing for a decision, it was evident that the President did not resent it, for he wrote at the same time: I hail your letters with deep satisfaction and unspoken thanks go out to you for each one of them, whether I write or not, and the most affectionate appreciation for all that you do for me.

President Wilson was evidently fearful lest once the Japanese forces found themselves in Siberia, it would be difficult to persuade them to leave. Their military leaders were not likely to see much value in intervention unless it was to result in Japanese control in Eastern Siberia, to which Wilson was steadily opposed. The President sought in every way to limit the size of the Japanese army and to lay down conditions of withdrawal. House noted in his diary on July 25 that Wilson was 'fretted with the Japanese attitude.'

'The difficulty I think,' added House, 'is that there are two parties in Japan. The civil Government wishes to coöperate with us and sees the necessity for it. The military clique see nothing in such intervention for Japan. They have not the vision to know that in the end it would be better for the Japanese to do the altruistic thing. It is the

<sup>1</sup> Wilson to House, July 8, 1918.

old story one meets everywhere and the one met since the beginning of the world: "What is there in it for me?" I hope before the war is over we can drive it into the consciousness of individuals as well as nations that from a purely selfish viewpoint, it is better to take the big, broad outlook that what is best for all is best for one.'

At the end of July President Wilson reached an agreement with the Japanese, which resulted in the landing at Vladivostok of a small American force and ultimately of a Japanese army of some size. The purpose of the expedition was publicly defined with meticulous care by the State Department in a declaration to which the Japanese Government gave full adherence.<sup>1</sup>

*Declaration of Department of State*

August 3, 1918

'... Military action is admissible in Russia now only to render such protection and help as is possible to the Czechoslovaks against the armed Austrian and German prisoners who are attacking them, and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. . . .

'The Government of the United States wishes to announce to the people of Russia in the most public and solemn manner that it contemplates no interference with the political sovereignty of Russia, no intervention in her internal affairs — not even in the local affairs of the limited areas which her military force may be obliged to occupy — and no

<sup>1</sup> The expedition to Siberia led to misunderstanding and difficulties. The Americans understood that each nation would send in 7000 troops, and were surprised to learn that the Japanese forces considerably exceeded that number. It developed that the Japanese contended that the Americans had violated the agreement by sending 2000 noncombatants in addition to the 7000 combatant troops. The exact number of Japanese troops despatched was not known, but they were estimated by American officials at more than 60,000.

impairment of her territorial integrity, either now or hereafter, but that what we are about to do has as its single and only object the rendering of such aid as shall be acceptable to the Russian people themselves in their endeavors to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny. The Japanese Government, it is understood, will issue a similar assurance.'

Nothing was said or done at this time about the creation of an economic relief commission, which Colonel House had hoped would be emphasized and which, from his letter of July 8, President Wilson had seriously considered. On August 17, the President visited House on the North Shore. The Colonel recorded in his diary:

'After lunch we had our usual conference for an hour or more. We discussed Russia and the economic mission. I was surprised to find that he did not have any one in mind to head this mission and asked for suggestions. He thought there was no haste, because he believed the military forces should go in before the economic. . . . I would have featured the economic part of it and sent in that section before the military, or at least have coöperated with it.'<sup>1</sup>

Neither the hopes nor the fears that had been aroused by the long discussions regarding intervention in Siberia were fulfilled. It is true that the Bolshevik Government protested bitterly against it, especially as Japan proceeded to increase the number of her expeditionary forces. But it is doubtful whether the hostility of the Bolsheviks to the Allies was rendered more intense thereby than it would have been in any case. Nor did the expedition throw Russia into

<sup>1</sup> The plan for Russian relief, as finally put into effect, was quite different from the suggestions of House for a relief expedition in 1918. The history of the plan and its operation is found in H. H. Fisher, *The Famine in Soviet Russia* (Macmillan Company, 1927).



the hands of Germany, as had been feared, since by autumn Germany had collapsed and the treaties of Brest-Litovsk were torn up. On the other hand, intervention, as finally carried through, did not affect the military situation in the West nor even strengthen the Allied position as against the Bolsheviks in the following year.

Plans for an effective expeditionary force to Siberia and one capable of redressing the military balance in Europe would have required something like a miracle to assist them to success. The objections of the United States to a large and purely Japanese army in Siberia were inflexible, even if such an army could have been transported across the largest continent so as to reconstruct an Eastern Front against Germany.<sup>1</sup> In no other way could the purpose of intervention in Siberia have been carried through. It was a practical impossibility to send a large American army across the Pacific and far into Siberia, with only a single line of communication to Vladivostok. The shipping necessary to carry supplies for such a force was lacking. In the spring of 1918 all available American troops and every American ship was demanded for the reënforcement of France. From first to last, the American military leaders protested against the Siberian 'side-show.'

It is easy to criticize the slowness, the hesitations, and the changes of mind that characterized the decisions taken regarding Allied policy in Siberia. It is more difficult to define a constructive policy which, under the conditions, might have proved of practical value. It must not be forgotten that at the time when the Allied leaders had to meet the problems raised by the Bolshevik surrender to Germany, they were also confronted with the military crisis on the Western Front. It was there that the war would be won or lost.

<sup>1</sup> In 1928 Colonel House wrote: 'The Japanese told me it would take their entire army to keep the Siberian Railway open.'

## APPENDIX

*President Wilson's First Note to Allied Ambassadors Regarding Japanese Expedition*

[Written about February 28, 1918. Not circulated.]

'The Government of the United States is made constantly aware at every turn of events that it is the desire of the people of the United States that, while coöperating with all its energies with its associates in the war in every direct enterprise of the war in which it is possible for it to take part, it should leave itself diplomatically free wherever it can do so without injustice to its associates. It is for this reason that the Government of the United States has not thought it wise to join the Governments of the Entente in asking the Japanese Government to act in Siberia. It has no objection to that request being made, and it wishes to assure the Japanese Government that it has the entire confidence that in putting an armed force into Siberia it is doing so as an ally of Russia, with no purpose but to save Siberia from the invasion of the armies and intrigues of Germany and with entire willingness to leave the determination of all questions that may affect the permanent fortunes of Siberia to the council of peace.'

*President Wilson's Second Note to Allied Ambassadors Regarding Japanese Expedition*

March 5, 1918

'The Government of the United States has been giving the most careful and anxious consideration to the conditions now prevailing in Siberia and their possible remedy. It realizes the extreme danger of anarchy to which the Siberian provinces are exposed and imminent risk also of German invasion and domination.

'It shares with the Governments of the Entente the view that if invasion is deemed wise, the Government of Japan is in the best situation to undertake it and could accomplish it most efficiently. It has moreover the utmost confidence in the Japanese Government and would be entirely willing, so far as its own feelings towards that government are concerned, to entrust the enterprise to it. But it is bound in frankness to say that the wisdom of invasion seems to it most questionable. If it were undertaken the Government of the United States assumes that the most explicit assurances would be given that it was undertaken by Japan as an ally of Russia in Russia's interest and with the sole view of holding it safe against Germany and at the absolute disposal of the final peace conference. Otherwise the Central Powers could and would make it appear that Japan was doing in the East exactly what Germany is doing in the West and was seeking to counter the condemnation which all the world must pronounce against Germany's invasion of Russia which she contemplates to justify on the pretext of restoring order.

'And it is the judgment of the Government of the United States uttered with the utmost respect that even with such assurances given they could in the same way be discredited by those whose interest it

was to discredit them; for hot resentment would be general in Russia itself, and that the whole action might play into the hands of the enemies of Russia and particularly of the enemies of the Russian revolution for which the Government of the United States entertains the greatest sympathy in spite of all the unhappiness and misfortunes which have for the time being sprung out of it. The Government of the United States begs once more to express to the Government of Japan its warmest friendship and confidence and once more begs it to accept its expressions of judgment as uttered only in the frankness of friendship.'

*President Wilson's Message to the Soviet Congress*

March 11, 1918

'May I not take advantage of the meeting of the Congress of the Soviets to express the sincere sympathy which the people of the United States feel for the Russian people at this moment when the German power has been thrust in to interrupt and turn back the whole struggle for freedom and substitute the wishes of Germany for the purpose of the people of Russia.

'Although the Government of the United States is, unhappily, not now in a position to render the direct and effective aid it would wish to render, I beg to assure the people of Russia through the congress that it will avail itself of every opportunity to secure for Russia once more complete sovereignty and independence in her own affairs, and full restoration to her great rôle in the life of Europe and the modern world.

'The whole heart of the people of the United States is with the people of Russia in the attempt to free themselves forever from autocratic government and become the masters of their own life.'

*Reply of the Congress of Soviets*

March 15, 1918

'... The Russian Socialistic Federative Republic of Soviets takes advantage of President Wilson's communication to express to all peoples perishing and suffering from the horrors of imperialistic war its warm sympathy and firm belief that the happy time is not far distant when the laboring masses of all countries will throw off the yoke of capitalism and will establish a socialistic state of society, which alone is capable of securing just and lasting peace, as well as the culture and well-being of all laboring people. ...'

*Sir William Wiseman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, May 1, 1918

There are four courses open to the Allies:

1. To take no action, but await developments. This open to two very strong objections. First, it enables the Germans to withdraw more



troops and guns from the Russian front; secondly, it enables the Germans to organize Russia politically and economically for their own advantage and gives them undisputed access to grain, oil, and fat supplies in Siberia and valuable metal supplies in the Urals. Also it enables them to sustain Austrian morale by telling them that the war is over in the East and that they have only to help in the West to secure a complete German victory.

2. Allied intervention at the invitation of Bolsheviki. This would probably be the most desirable course, the various Allied missions to come from Archangel and Southern Russia, giving the whole proposition the character of an Interallied movement rather than solely Japanese. From Vladivostok the main military force would come, consisting in the first place of about five Japanese divisions accompanied by Allied Missions and a few Allied troops, to be followed by a very much larger Japanese force. This would meet a Bolshevik force which they would help organize and could, it is thought, easily penetrate to Cheliabinsk as the first stage of operation. This would deny all Siberian resources to the Germans and threaten the re-creation of a formidable Eastern front.

This programme, however, depends upon an invitation from Trotzky, and I begin to doubt whether this is feasible. If Trotzky invites Allied intervention the Germans would regard it as a hostile act and probably turn his Government out of Moscow and Petrograd. With this centre lost the best opinion considers that the whole Bolshevik influence in Russia would collapse. No one knows this better than Trotzky and for this reason he probably hesitates. The only chance would be if Trotzky would be prepared to abandon Moscow and retire along the Siberian Railway to meet the Allied force, calling upon all loyal Russians to rally to him and save the revolution from German reactionary intrigues.

3. If we decide Trotzky will not or cannot invite us, we might find Kerenski and other members of the original republican revolution and get them to form a Government Committee in Manchuria and do what Trotzky will not do. Many think that this would be the signal for the rising of all elements that are best in Russia.<sup>1</sup> It would have the advantage that Kerenski's is the Government still recognized and we could deal with him through his Ambassadors in Washington and elsewhere.

4. The only other scheme is for Allied intervention without the invitation of any party in Russia and possibly against the wishes of the Bolsheviki. This is urged as a last resource by our military people and the French, but has of course its disadvantages.

It is certain that nothing can be done without the whole-hearted co-operation of the President. I believe that the Japanese are influenced by two considerations: First, they are genuinely afraid of German domination of Siberia, eventually threatening their position in the Far East. Also a strong party in Japan really want to do their part in helping the

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<sup>1</sup> This opinion was by no means universal among American observers. Arthur Bullard cabled to House: 'There is a rumor that Kerenski is training for the rôle of Venizelos. I hope not. The opposition to a man who has already disappointed great hopes is sure to be intense. A dark horse is better than a dead one.'



Allies and see in the Japanese advance towards the Eastern Front an opportunity for the Japanese to play a glorious part in the World War. Far-seeing Japanese statesmen also foresee an opportunity of friendly coöperation with America, which might go far to solve the Japanese-American problem. Those who know them best maintain that anything they solemnly undertake before the whole world, they will strain their utmost to carry through.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FORCE WITHOUT STINT OR LIMIT

There is a great danger of the war being lost unless the numerical inferiority of the Allies can be remedied as rapidly as possible by the advent of American troops.

*Telegram of Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando, June 1, 1918*

#### I

ALL through the spring of 1918 the tide of success, both political and military, seemed to be setting towards the Central Powers. They had cleared up the Eastern Front, forced the surrender of Russia and Rumania, and established their control upon the border provinces. Austria-Hungary accepted German domination in a new military treaty, the essential clause of which provided for the employment of troops 'according to one common principle, the initiative of which shall be left principally to Germany.' The Berlin and Vienna Governments, their prestige restored by success in the East, suppressed the elements of dissatisfaction at home and concentrated for the supreme effort in the West.

To meet this impending attack the Entente Allies had need of diplomatic as well as military unity. Hitherto, as Colonel House had discovered during the Interallied Conference of the preceding autumn, there had been no real co-ordination of policy as regards the enemy. The Governments of France and Italy, and to a lesser extent that of Great Britain, had in their hearts felt some suspicion of President Wilson's plan of appealing to the German people against their Government. They found it difficult themselves to make any distinction, and feared lest an expression of friendly sentiments towards the German people might weaken the fighting morale of the Allies. Success would depend upon the creation of a real unity of purpose between the United States

and the Entente. A telegram from Mr. Ackerman to Colonel House, early in March, emphasized its importance.

*Mr. Carl W. Ackerman to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

BERNE, March 9, 1918

Strong indications that Germany is centering diplomacy upon the crisis which she expects to follow coming offensive. In the past, the military party has succeeded by eliminating Entente nations after great battles, and fundamental policy has been to prevent Allied unity. Germany is now working through Hertling publicly, and some others privately, to cause dissension in England, France, Italy, or Belgium, hoping to make separate peace with one or more after coming campaign. Therefore our next political move should not only bridge the present crisis but lay firm foundation upon which all Allies can stand after offensive.

Germany's fear is America's moral influence, not only with the Allies but inside Germany and Austria. Enemy's great hope is to undermine this influence, which Germany believes can best be accomplished by preventing Allied political unity. Therefore United States and Allies should be united politically and diplomatically now, because of moral effect upon enemy peoples and because of necessity for unity in crisis following summer offensives. I believe political and moral offensive of Allies should be Allied, not only American as in past.

I believe we should convince the Allies that this united moral influence is the only thing which German military offensive cannot destroy, therefore I reëmphasize conclusion in my last telegram, that political and diplomatic affairs of United States and Allies be buttoned up.

ACKERMAN

The desirable unity of purpose between the United States

and the Allies was achieved at least temporarily through the change in Wilsonian policy which followed upon the German military and diplomatic successes of the spring. The change was one of emphasis rather than of principle. The essence of Wilson's speeches had been, 'War upon German imperialism, peace with the German liberals,' and hitherto he had laid chief stress upon the profit which the liberals would acquire by separating their fortunes from those of Ludendorff and accepting the terms which he offered. But in March, 1918, it had become obviously futile to appeal in conciliatory tones to German Social Democrats, while Ludendorff, already successful in the East, could promise them, through victory in the West, even greater profits. The Allies must persuade them that Ludendorff was wrong, and the sole method of persuasion, at this juncture, was to defeat him on the field of battle. As Mr. Ackerman cabled to Colonel House from Berne: 'Our chief emphasis from to-day should be upon our determination. The more strength we and our Allies exhibit, the greater will be the reaction in Germany from the offensive and from lack of food and from political disagreements. If we appear weary or inclined to peace when Germany is worn out, there will be no reaction in Germany.'

This was the sincere conviction of Allied leaders, and as soon as Wilson adopted such a tone he found himself in complete accord with them as with most students of German political psychology. His earlier statements of fair terms to a Germany ready to disavow Ludendorff and what he represented, were not forgotten and were later to bear fruit. But in the spring of 1918 the soundest political strategy was to reiterate the impossibility of peace with the kind of Government that had imposed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

President Wilson apparently decided to adopt this strategy immediately after the signing of peace by the Russians. His decision was reënforced by the news of the German victories on the Western Front in March. It was the moment when



the moral as well as the material assistance of America could be of importance. Colonel House was in Washington during the week that Wilson prepared a speech designed to show the Allies, as well as Germany, America's unyielding determination to support the Allies and fight through to victory. House's diary refers briefly to the composition of the speech:

*'March 28, 1918:* The main work we did to-night was to outline the speech he [Wilson] decided he should make soon. The opportunity will be given him when he reviews the Camp Meade troops at Baltimore on April 6, which is the anniversary of our entrance into the war. It is also the occasion of opening the Third Liberty Loan.

*'April 9, 1918:* He wrote something on his speech almost every night and we would then talk it over. He would come in with the speech in sections to discuss it. He made such eliminations as seemed advisable without argument. There were but few. He outlined the speech first in paragraphs and it was admirably done. Each paragraph was afterwards enlarged. He agreed that it should be short, and that it should leave the door open for peace and yet strike a note that the German military party would clearly understand. We both hoped that what he said about our meeting force with force would allay something of the panicky feeling in England and France. . . .'

Wilson's speech of April 6, despite its brevity, was the most effective indictment of the German military leaders made during the war. Their treatment of Russia proved conclusively the hollowness of their professed desire to conclude a fair peace and to accord to the peoples with whose fortunes they were dealing the right to choose their own allegiance.

*'The real test of their justice and fair play has come,'* said Wilson. *'From this we may judge the rest. . . . Their fair*

professions are forgotten. They nowhere set up justice, but everywhere impose their power and exploit everything for their own use and aggrandizement; and the peoples of conquered provinces are invited to be free under their dominion. . . .

'I do not wish, even in this moment of utter disillusionment, to judge harshly or unrighteously. I judge only what the German arms have accomplished with unpitying thoroughness throughout every fair region they have touched.

'What, then, are we to do? For myself, I am ready, ready still, ready even now, to discuss a fair and just and honest peace at any time that it is sincerely purposed — a peace in which the strong and the weak shall fare alike. But the answer, when I proposed such a peace, came from the German commanders in Russia, and I cannot mistake the meaning of the answer.

'I accept the challenge. . . . Germany has once more said that force, and force alone, shall decide whether Justice and Peace shall reign in the affairs of men, whether Right as America conceives it or Dominion as she conceives it shall determine the destinies of mankind. There is, therefore, but one response possible from us: Force, Force to the utmost, Force without stint or limit, the righteous and triumphant Force which shall make Right the law of the world, and cast every selfish dominion down in the dust.'

## II

There was unanimity between America and the Western Allies. They would oppose force with force, and once the American man-power were made available there could be no doubt of the outcome. In the mean time there was serious danger lest Germany with superior strength on the Western Front should use up Allied reserves, separate the French and British armies, and inflict upon each an overwhelming de-

feat. It had become a race between Ludendorff and United States troops.

The need of American man-power had been stressed at the Interallied Conferences in Paris, in November, 1917; at that time the military leaders of the Entente suggested to House that instead of waiting to form a complete and independent American army, General Pershing should permit his troops to be incorporated as individuals or by small units into the British and French armies. House had carried this plan back to Wilson, who discussed carefully with him the nature of the requests made by the Allies during the November Conferences. It was the President's desire to do everything in his power to meet Allied wishes; at the same time he never faltered in his determination that the commander of the American Expeditionary Force must have a free hand and must use his own military judgment. Following his discussions with House on military policy, the President arranged to send a cablegram of instructions, the first draft of which he left with House; it was substantially the same as that ultimately forwarded by the Secretary of War and illustrates Wilson's point of view very clearly.

*Draft Cablegram to Commander of A.E.F.*

WASHINGTON, December 18, 1917

Both English and French are pressing upon the President their desire to have your forces amalgamated with theirs by regiments and companies and both express belief in impending heavy drive by Germans somewhere along the line of the Western Front. We do not desire loss of identity of our forces, but regard that as secondary to the meeting of any critical situation by the most helpful use possible of the troops at your command. . . . The President, however, desires you to have full authority to use the forces at your command as you deem wise in consultation with the French



and British Commanders-in-Chief. It is suggested for your consideration that possibly places might be selected for your forces nearer the junction of the British and French lines which would enable you to throw your strength in whichever direction seemed most necessary. This suggestion is not, however, pressed beyond whatever merit it has in your judgment, the President's sole purpose being to acquaint you with the representations made here and to authorize you to act with entire freedom in making the best disposition and use of your forces possible to accomplish the main purpose in view.

It is hoped that complete unity and coördination of action can be secured in this matter by your conferences with the French and British Commanders. . . .

The difference in point of view between the French and British commanders and the American commander in France was fundamental. The former desired to use American troops as a reservoir, filling up their losses therefrom, and thus giving to the Americans actual experience on the battlefield in the midst of veterans, which they regarded as the speediest and most efficient training. Such a method would prevent the creation of an American army in France, but in the opinion of the Entente military leaders it was the method by which the United States could render the most and the earliest service. A report which Mr. Frazier sent to Colonel House of the meeting of the Supreme War Council on January 30, at Versailles, left no doubt of their opinion.

'General Foch, General Pétain, General Haig,' wrote Mr. Frazier, 'agree that the American arms if taken as an autonomous unit, could not be counted upon for effective aid during the present year, and that the only method of rendering them useful at the earliest possible moment would be by amalgamating American regiments or battalions in French or

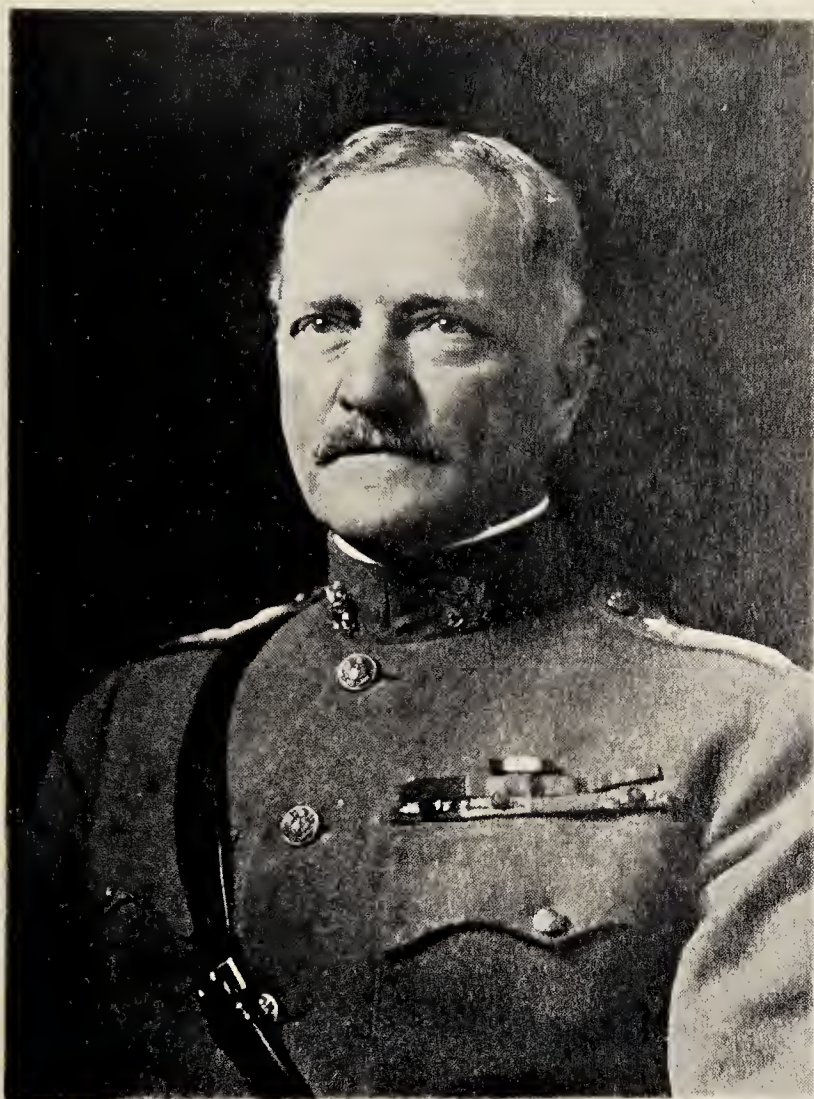


British divisions. General Pétain was particularly outspoken on this subject. The Italian Prime Minister stated that in his opinion the Council should request General Bliss to state whether the American Government would or would not be willing to accept this system of amalgamation. . . .’

The Commander of the American Expeditionary Force, naturally, took a different attitude. He pointed out that the national sentiment of the United States was opposed to service under a foreign flag. The method proposed would also have unfortunate moral consequences in the United States, where it would provoke criticism of the Administration and play into the hands of German propagandists, who would declare that American troops were being utilized by the Allies for their own purposes. More than that, the military enthusiasm of the American troops was obviously dependent to a large degree upon their serving under their own flag.

Some three weeks previous, on January 8, André Tardieu had cabled very definitely to the French Government:

‘If your aim is really amalgamation, that is, the enlistment of the American army by small units on our front, you will fail. It is not only the American High Command which will oppose such a policy, but the Government, public opinion, and events. You could not get the English to consent to any such thing when their army was quite small; and you will not get the Americans to consent. If, on the contrary, you intend this only as a temporary measure, I believe that to complete their training we shall manage to obtain the incorporation of American divisions and brigades, perhaps even of regiments. During my stay in France, I had several talks on the subject with General Pershing, who, on this temporary basis, did not say No. But if we appear to ask more and try to dislo-



To Colonel House,  
My friend & war-time comrade  
as a souvenir of our association together.  
John J. Pershing.



cate the future American army, we shall get nothing, not even the foregoing.’<sup>1</sup>

The compromise which Tardieu mentioned in this cable was suggested in principle to the Supreme War Council by the Americans, and was perforce accepted by the Entente. According to the agreement then reached, the infantry of six American divisions should be immediately transported to be brigaded with the British or French; the agreement stated explicitly that the principle of an independent American army was to be maintained.

‘The President desired to see Wiseman,’ wrote House in his diary on February 3, ‘in order to take up the question of using our troops in the French and British armies. Balfour has been sending cables freely about this matter and so has Pershing. Sir William’s cable to Mr. Balfour, a copy of which is attached, will explain the President’s position.’

*Sir William Wiseman to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

WASHINGTON, February 3, 1918

I lunched to-day with the President and Secretary of War. The President asked me to send you a cable explaining his views regarding the disposal of American troops in France. The following is the substance of his arguments:

In the first place the President is confident you will believe that he is actuated solely by what he considers the best policy for the common good. The President says American troops will be put into the line by battalions with the French or British if it should become absolutely necessary, but he wishes to place before you frankly the very grave objections he sees to this course.

Apart from the serious danger of friction owing to different

<sup>1</sup> Printed in Tardieu, *France and America*, 219.



methods, it is necessary that an American army should be created under American leaders and American flag in order that the people of America shall solidly and cheerfully support the war. The placing of American troops in small bodies under foreign leaders would be taken as a proof that the recent criticism of the War Department was justified and that the American military machine had broken down. The American people would not, he fears, understand the military reasons and the necessary secrecy would prevent a very full explanation being given.

Their resentment would be increased if an agreement was made between the American and British Governments for the disposal of American troops in this way before they left home. It would not have so bad an effect if Pershing, as American Commander-in-Chief, decided after the men arrived in France that it was necessary to place some of them at the disposal of the British in this way. The President therefore hopes you will provide transportation for the six American divisions at present under discussion without making a bargain and, if they are used to reënforce the British Line, that you will agree they are to be used by Pershing as he thinks best.

At the same time the President repeats most earnestly that he will risk any adverse public criticism in order to win the war and he has told Pershing that he may put American troops by battalions in the British line or use them in any way which in his, Pershing's, judgment may be dictated by the necessities of the military situation. . . .

WILLIAM WISEMAN

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *February 7, 1918*

Please express to the President my gratitude for the exposition of his views regarding the disposal of American

troops at the front. I appreciate highly the frankness of this communication and I have never for a moment doubted that he is actuated in this, as in all other questions, solely by consideration for the common good.

Speaking for myself, I attach the greatest weight to his arguments. American soldiers must feel that they belong to an American army, fighting under the American flag. It is only on these terms that the best can be got out of them or that they can count on the enthusiastic support of the American people. I know that these views were strongly pressed by General Pershing at Versailles, but I understand that proposals were made there which in his view would enable small American units to train, and, if need was considerable, to fight in the immediate future in companies with French and British troops without interfering with or delaying the creation of a great American army. If so, early and much-needed assistance would be given us on the Western Front without hindering the realization of legitimate American ideals.

I hope I am right. I need hardly add that I am entirely at the President's disposal if anything I can do can help to make the position easier.

BALFOUR

The French and British military commanders were by no means satisfied with the compromise which the Americans offered, but they accepted it with every evidence of good temper.

*Mr. A. H. Frazier to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, *January 29, 1918*

During an interview between General Bliss and the President, when I was present as interpreter, M. Poincaré made the statement that General Pétain and General Pershing

were in complete agreement. General Bliss thereupon asked whether he was authorized to telegraph this information to President Wilson. Before replying M. Poincaré summoned an A.D.C., who telegraphed to Compiègne to ascertain whether there had been any change in the situation since the last interview between the French and American Commanders-in-Chief. The reply came back from Compiègne by telephone that there had been no change and that the understanding was complete and satisfactory.

FRAZIER

### III

The most interesting development of the January meeting of the Supreme War Council was the plan for handling the general reserve; it crystallized the effort to make of the Supreme War Council a real factor of military coördination on the Western Front. It will be remembered that during the Paris conferences House had agreed with Clemenceau that the military advisers should form a board of coördination and that its chairman should have executive powers. To this the British raised objections on the ground that it was an infraction of the Rapallo Agreement and would come close to making of the chairman a generalissimo.

In January, a new plan was evolved by General Foch and Sir Henry Wilson which provided for a large measure of coördination. Since the Allies were decided to remain upon the defensive until the American troops appeared in force, they planned to create a general reserve, drawn from all the Allied armies, which would be placed under the orders of the military advisers of the Supreme War Council. The latter would form for this purpose an Executive War Board, which could throw reënforcements to any point attacked by Ludendorff. If the Germans drove back either the British or the French, in so doing they would present an open and unguarded flank, against which the Allied reserve could be



hurled. It was in essence the strategy utilized by Foch in his July counter-offensive, the beginning of victory. It left the British and French Commanders-in-Chief supreme over their armies on the fighting line, but created an authority higher than the Commanders-in-Chief to dispose of the reserve. It was open to criticism in that it divided the forces and placed the command of the reserve in charge of a committee. But the committee, as constituted, expressed the military brains of Foch and it was free from the dangerous preoccupation of each Commander-in-Chief — how to save his own army when attacked.

The plan was approved by the Supreme War Council at its January meeting, and received the enthusiastic endorsement of both Pershing and Bliss, who believed it the best available substitute for a generalissimo.<sup>1</sup> The French and British Commanders-in-Chief were present at the meeting of the Council which created the Executive War Board and the General Reserve, and seemed to acquiesce. When, however, they were requested to contribute their quota to the General Reserve, Sir Douglas Haig, after waiting nearly a month, replied that he had no divisions to contribute. A new plan was then drafted by himself and Pétain for resisting the German attack. The reserve was not constituted, the powers of the Executive War Board vanished (for it had nothing to command), and the Foch scheme of defense was shattered.

It is a question for military experts to decide, whether Haig was insufficiently supplied with troops, considering the length of his line, and thus was justified in his refusal to coöperate in the Foch plan; and also whether that plan would have actually fulfilled the hopes of the military members of the Supreme War Council. It is certain, however, that the Haig-Pétain plan was inadequate under given conditions, for when the Germans attacked, on March 21 (and that too at the

<sup>1</sup> Pershing to House, February 27, 1918; Bliss, in *Foreign Affairs*, December, 1922.



point named by the Executive War Board), they broke the Allied line and destroyed the British Fifth Army. Within less than a week they threatened the capture of Amiens and the definitive separation of the British and French armies.

The peril of the Entente armies led to their salvation. It was clear that if Allied military unity were not at once established, Germany might defeat the Allies separately. The German victory was not the result of anything so much as unified action and concentration of forces. During the week that followed March 21, one hundred German divisions had come into action against thirty-five British and only fifteen French. The moral was obvious; the Allies must secure unity of control.

André Tardieu, whose relations with Clemenceau were close, pictures the French Prime Minister as always working for the supreme command and unchangeable in his opinion as to whom it should be given.

‘As soon as he assumed the reins of government in November, 1917, M. Clemenceau set to work to obtain more and better [than the Supreme War Council]. I had informed him that he could count on President Wilson’s aid. On the other hand, opposition was still manifest in London and when during a brief stay in Paris at the end of 1917 I publicly declared that the American and French Governments were agreed on the necessity of a unity of command, several English newspapers protested. On the eve of my departure for New York, on December 30, 1917, I had a last talk with M. Clemenceau. I said to him:

“‘They are going to talk to me again over there about unity of command. And no doubt they will ask me, ‘Who?’ What shall I say?’”

‘M. Clemenceau replied: “Foch.”’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tardieu, *Truth about the Treaty*, 37.

On March 26, at Doullens, the new Secretary for War, Lord Milner, representing the British, accompanied by the chief British generals, met Poincaré, Clemenceau, and the French military leaders.<sup>1</sup> It was settled that: 'General Foch is charged by the British and French Governments with co-ordinating the action of the Allied armies on the Western Front.' For a few more weeks he was compelled to carry through the task 'more by negotiation than by command,' but from that moment control of the forces in the West was in his hands. A new era had begun.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Balfour in the mean time cabled to House asking him to impress upon the President the need for American troops. Would it not be possible for the United States to increase the number of embarkations and to send 120,000 troops a month for four months? Lord Reading also laid before House the gist of a long cable which he had received from the British Prime Minister, emphasizing the immediate importance of American man-power. Colonel House's notes of Lord Reading's communication follow:

*Reading Statement on Military Situation*

March 29, 1918

'While there are good hopes that the present effort of the enemy may be checked, it is possible that Amiens will be lost, and the events of the immediate future will prove whether the enemy can reach this point or not. If Amiens falls we shall have to face a very grave military situation. In any event, the enemy has certainly shown his ability to break

<sup>1</sup> Field-Marshal Haig agreed that he would be glad to receive General Foch's advice.

<sup>2</sup> At Beauvais, on April 3, Foch was given a brevet of actual command: 'The strategic direction of military operations.' But the Commanders-in-Chief were left in control of 'the tactical conduct of their armies,' with the right of appeal to their respective Governments. It was not until April 24 that Foch received the 'Commandement en chef des armées alliées.'

through the Franco-British front over a wide area, and it is certain that if the German High Command cannot secure all their aims in the present battle, they will at once commence preparing their forces to deliver a further attack at the earliest possible date. The point at which this attack will be delivered must depend to a great extent on the eventual result of the operations now proceeding. The entire military position in the future must depend on whether we can reconstitute and reënforce our armies in sufficient time to check the next blow, and, in the light of the last week's fighting, it is clear that the problem of man-power is the fundamental question with which the Allies are faced. . . .

'Our losses so far have reached about 120,000 men. We can barely make good these losses by bringing in our whole resources of partially and fully trained men, and we shall be obliged to use all our trained reserves in doing so. In these circumstances we are immediately taking action to increase the number of our troops by taking in youths of 18 and by raising the age limit to 50, and we are also again "combing out" our industrial establishments to a large extent, a proceeding which will cause serious hardship and dislocation to our industries. Furthermore, we are ready to run the risk of serious difficulties in Ireland, as we regard it as absolutely essential that we should during the summer of this year be in a position to show ourselves more powerful than the Germans. These drastic measures will, we hope, give us 400,000 to 500,000 men as reënforcements, but they cannot be given sufficient training to enable us to employ them in France for another four months at least. There is, therefore, the risk of a shortage during the period of May to July next, and this is the very time at which the next great effort by the Germans is to be anticipated.

'Thus, in order to be certain of checking the enemy during these months, and making it impossible for him to reach a military decision on the West Front, it will be necessary to

make good the deficiency during this period by the use of American troops. In this way alone it is possible to secure the position of the Allies.

‘The shipping experts in London have estimated that the tonnage which we can provide by heavier sacrifices in other ways will be able to embark about 60,000 men in the United States during April, and, according to an estimate by Admiral Sims, 52,000 men per month can be carried by the American trooping fleet. There is also a certain volume of Dutch shipping which could be used by the United States, and the use of certain further Italian tonnage is being secured by us. We think that in all it is possible to embark 120,000 from the United States during April, a number which could be somewhat increased in the following months. . . .

‘If the struggle should be decided against us without these troops being employed, it is quite possible that the war may be terminated and the cause lost, for which the President has pleaded so eloquently, without the United States having received a chance of making use of anything but a small fraction of her forces.

‘The whole future of the war will, in our opinion, depend on whether the enemy or the Allies can be first to repair the losses which have been incurred in this great struggle, and it is certain that there will not be a moment’s delay on the part of the Germans. They are in possession of sufficient manpower to repair what they have lost, and there is also the Austrian army 250,000 of which are, according to statements made by the German press, already in the West. If we cannot refit as rapidly as the enemy, this will give the enemy the opportunity to achieve the definite military decision by which the German leaders hope to terminate the war as a German victory.’



*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, March 26, 1918

Prime Minister and I saw Mr. Baker <sup>1</sup> this morning and earnestly pressed upon him the urgency of obtaining from the proper authorities assent to the following suggestions:

*First:* That four American divisions should be used at once to hold the line and relieve further French divisions.

*Second:* We understand that transport is available for bringing six complete American divisions to this country. We strongly urge that, in present crisis, this tonnage would be more usefully employed if it were not used to carry complete divisions with their full complement of artillery *et cetera*, but if it were used in main for transport of infantry of which at this moment we stand in most pressing need.

*Third:* That as temporary expedient American engineer units in France now engaged in preparing base and line of communication of future American Army and said to include many skilled engineers should be diverted from present occupation and utilized as extemporized engineer units for construction of defences *et cetera* in rear of our armies.

*Fourth:* That one of American displacement divisions which is reported to be complete with transport should also be employed in the line either as a separate division or to increase infantry in combatant divisions.

BALFOUR

*Colonel House to Mr. A. J. Balfour*

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, March 26, 1918

Your No. 68 received and has been handed to the President with my urgent recommendation that orders be at once issued as suggested.

<sup>1</sup> Secretary Baker spent some weeks in a visit of inspection in France and England.

Although anxious we have such faith in the courage and tenacity of the British troops that we feel confident of the final outcome.

EDWARD HOUSE

[Cablegram]

NEW YORK, *March 27, 1918*

The President agrees with practically every suggestion that you make regarding the disposition of our army.

I am glad to inform you that Secretary Baker, after consultation with Generals Bliss and Pershing, has given orders making effective the recommendations set forth in your message.

EDWARD HOUSE

*Mr. A. J. Balfour to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

LONDON, *April 3, 1918*

May I personally express to you my very great appreciation of the noble response which the President has made to our urgent request for American help in this crisis. I feel sure that much was due to your efforts. I would like you to know that it is realized here how great a sacrifice has been made by America by allowing her battalions to be incorporated in British Divisions. I need hardly to assure you that I will do all in my power to make the position as little onerous as possible. . . .

BALFOUR

#### IV

The March crisis had led General Pershing to go at once to General Foch's headquarters and to place at his disposal all American combatant forces. Approximately 300,000 troops had by this time reached France. The acceptance of this offer meant the dispersion of those troops along the Allied

front and a consequent delay in building up a distinctive American force in Lorraine, although Pershing planned to keep his divisions intact.

Furthermore, on March 27 the Supreme War Council passed, with American approval, the following resolution, which provided for the temporary brigading of American troops with Allied units, although it also emphasized the principle of an independent American army. It was accepted by Pershing.

*Resolution of Supreme War Council*

‘The Military Representatives are of the opinion that it is highly desirable that the American Government should assist the Allied Armies as soon as possible by permitting in principle the temporary service of American units in Allied Army corps and divisions. Such reënforcements must, however, be obtained from other units than those American divisions which are now operating with the French, and the units so temporarily employed must eventually be returned to the American army.

‘The Military Representatives are of the opinion that from the present time, in execution of the foregoing, and until otherwise directed by the Supreme War Council, only American infantry and machine-gun units, organized as that Government may decide, be brought to France, and that all agreements or conventions hitherto made in conflict with this decision be modified accordingly.’

In conjunction with the promise of President Wilson that the United States would ship 120,000 troops a month for four months, the Allied leaders took this resolution to mean that all American troops transported during four months would be infantry and machine-gunners and would be brigaded with the Allies. General Pershing, however, did not so understand

it. He was firm always in his insistence upon the need of building up an American force as soon as possible, and while he understood that the 60,000 troops for which the British had promised to find transportation might be brigaded, he believed that the agreement permitted him to use the excess tonnage over the 60,000 to complete American divisions. On April 9, Lord Reading, who had just received a long cable from his Government, informed Colonel House of its substance and asked his advice as to how best to take up the misunderstanding with the American Government.

‘It is plain,’ he said in effect to House, ‘that the views held by General Pershing are in no way consistent with the broad lines of policy which we understand to have been accepted by the President. The principal point of difference is that in our view the promise meant that, in the course of the four months, April, May, June, and July, 480,000 infantry and machine guns are to be brigaded with British or French troops. This obligation is not admitted by General Pershing, who clearly disapproves of the adoption of such a policy.

‘A further and lesser discrepancy is that the British Government, while quite in agreement with General Pershing as to the ultimate withdrawal of the troops brigaded with the British and French for the formation of an American army, consider that this process cannot and should not be attempted before about October or November next at the end of this year’s season for active military operations.

‘The President has shown such a firm grasp of the situation that we are most unwilling to cause him any possible embarrassment. . . . It is, however, essential to have the question cleared up, as the repeated indications of the difference between the view taken by General Pershing and what we understand to be the policy decided upon by the President show that those differences are of fundamental importance and closely affect the issues of the whole war.’



'I advised Reading,' wrote Colonel House in his diary, 'not to ask for an appointment with the President until tomorrow and not to see him until after he had received a letter from me which I will write to-day.' House sympathized both with the Allied leaders and with Pershing. 'Pershing's feeling,' he wrote the President, 'that an American army under his command should be established and made as formidable as possible is understandable. Nevertheless, the thing to be done now is to stop the Germans and to stop them it is evident that we must put in every man that is available.' The only way to satisfy both sides was to increase the number of troops shipped, even beyond the 120,000 that had been planned. Before coming to a decision it would be necessary to await the arrival of Secretary Baker, who had been present in France and could report authoritatively upon conditions there. In the mean time all preparations for the transportation of American troops would be pushed.

On April 19 Ambassador Reading was handed another memorandum. It reiterated the promise of transporting 120,000 troops and intimated that they would consist of infantry and machine-gunners. It stated, however, that these troops 'will, under the direction and at the discretion of General Pershing, be assigned for training and use with British, French, and American divisions, as the exigencies of the situation from time to time require.'

The Commander of the A.E.F. thus was left free to distribute these troops as he deemed best. If tonnage facilities could be increased and more troops brought over, then it would be possible for him to assign the full 120,000 for purposes of brigading, and utilize the excess for the formation of an independent American army. It was this possibility which, in the mind of Colonel House, would furnish the solution to the problem.

Neither the British nor French were satisfied, however, and further negotiations and tentative agreements between

their military leaders and Pershing failed to convince them of the justice of his position. At the Abbeville conference, early in May, he offered six divisions of infantry and machine-gunners a month, provided tonnage facilities could be increased; but he insisted that the excess tonnage should be devoted to the transportation of the artillery and auxiliary arms necessary to complete American divisions. Furthermore, he agreed to leave his six divisions with Field-Marshal Haig only as 'long as the emergency lasted.' This would permit him later to recall the divisions when he considered that the emergency no longer existed.<sup>1</sup>

General Foch and the military representatives of the Supreme War Council necessarily disapproved this arrangement. They were convinced that to prevent the appalling danger of the Germans exhausting the Allied reserves and having them at their mercy in July or August, every available ton of shipping should be utilized for the transportation of American infantry and machine-gunners.

*Mr. A. H. Frazier to Colonel House*

[Cablegram]

PARIS, May 6, 1918

... The difference in result between these two plans is not insignificant; assuming that the tonnage can be found for transporting two hundred thousand men in the months of May and June and that only infantry were sent, the Allies could count on four hundred thousand men to fill up their shattered divisions and thus not be forced to reduce the number of such divisions. According to General Pershing's plan barely half of this number of infantry would be available.

FRAZIER

But Pershing was willing to wager that the Germans could

<sup>1</sup> As it developed, General Pershing early in August asked for the recall of the American divisions, in order to form the First American Army.

be stopped under his plan, and that the creation of an independent American army would mean such increased fighting power on the part of the American troops, fighting under their own flag, that the war would be shortened. He held firm to the offer which he made, and the Allies perforce accepted it. Whatever may have been the opinion in Washington as to the correctness of his judgment, the Administration supported the general in command.

In the middle of May came a suggestion that perhaps Wilson would send over Colonel House to represent the United States on the political side of the Supreme War Council. The suggestion was brought by Lord Reading to the Colonel before he took it to the President. He showed him a cable from Lloyd George which is paraphrased in Colonel House's notes as follows:

‘In my opinion it is of the greatest importance that Colonel House should come to Europe for the next meeting of the Supreme War Council. This meeting will be a most important one at which decisions on vital matters will be taken, especially in connection with the employment of American troops.

‘It does not seem to me possible to arrive at satisfactory conclusions unless there is present a political authority to represent the United States Government with whom we are able to deal on equal terms and who is in a position to reach a decision at once. . . .

‘Great injury results from the indecision and delay which are entailed by telegraphic negotiations. The French Premier has now pressed that the next meeting may take place on June 1, as both he and General Foch are most anxious that we should arrive at final decisions without delay.

‘We fully concur in this view as to the urgency of meeting. The date proposed would, of course, hardly allow sufficient

time for House to arrive before the opening meeting, even supposing that he left early next week. If he can come, I would, however, ask for a few days' postponement in spite of the deep regret with which I should regard delay, owing to the very great importance which I attach to his presence. Will you please urge this matter upon the President and, if the President concurs, endeavour to persuade House to start at the earliest possible moment? Please convey my apologies to him for the short notice given. I am quite aware that these sudden voyages are most embarrassing, but unfortunately, the enemy waits for no man's convenience. . . .'

Colonel House was quite definite in his own mind that neither he nor any one else ought to be sent over to the Supreme War Council meeting at this juncture. It was certain that the Allied leaders would appeal to an American political representative to persuade Pershing to postpone his plan for a separate American army, and it was equally certain that the Commander of the American forces must be allowed a free hand. President Wilson had promised himself that for the first time in the history of the country, there should be no political interference with the military conduct of the war.

*Colonel House to the President*

NEW YORK, May 20, 1918

DEAR GOVERNOR:

Reading took breakfast with me this morning. He is just back from Ottawa. He had a cable from the Prime Minister, instructing him to see you and request that you send me or some one else to represent the civil end of our Government at the next meeting of the Supreme War Council.

This meeting is scheduled to meet Saturday [week], but he thinks it could be postponed for a few days if I could leave within the next day or two. . . . What Lloyd George wants is



some one to overrule Pershing. They probably intend to bring up the same old question. . . .

We both believe that whatever is contemplated at this next meeting can rest long enough to get a cable directly from you in the event it is necessary to decide any difference which may arise between them and Pershing. Please be assured that I am perfectly willing to go now or at any time when in your judgment I should go. We think, however, that it would be much better for me to go later, probably in September or October, if you think it wise for me to go at all. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

On May 22 Lord Reading requested an interview of President Wilson, at which he presented the suggestion of Mr. Lloyd George that an American political representative be sent to Europe to sit on the Supreme War Council, and, after gaining permission to speak with entire candor, said that the British and French would like Colonel House. The President replied that if he sent any representative it would be House, but that he agreed entirely with House that it was inadvisable to send him at the present time.

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When necessity drives, a means can be found. If the Allies had to have American infantry and machine-gunners, then they must make available the tonnage necessary for them as well as for the units essential to the completion of the American divisions and the creation of an independent American army. On June 5, Pershing, Foch, and Milner reached an agreement.

It was assumed that no less than 250,000 American troops would be transported in each of the months of June and July. For the month of June 170,000 of these should be combatant troops (that is, six divisions minus artillery, ammunition

trains, or supply trains). For July there should be absolute priority for 140,000 combatant troops as described. The balance of each 250,000 should be troops of categories designated by the American Commanding General in France. If the arrangement were carried into effect the Allies would have at their disposal a number of infantry and machine-gunners far exceeding what they had asked or expected in March after the German offensive, and yet General Pershing would be able to proceed with the creation of the American army.

The Prime Ministers of France, Great Britain, and Italy insisted that only with the assistance thus provided for could there be any certainty of averting a German victory before the close of the summer, and they cabled directly to President Wilson to make sure that Pershing's promise was understood in Washington and that the Administration was prepared to carry it out. Wilson replied with a promise of full support, agreeing ultimately to put an army of one hundred divisions in France.

### *Cable of the Three Prime Ministers*

VERSAILLES, June 1, 1918

We desire to express our warmest thanks to President Wilson for remarkable promptness with which American aid in excess of what at one time seemed practicable has been rendered to Allies during past month to meet a great emergency. The crisis, however, still continues. General Foch has presented us a statement of the utmost gravity which points out that the numerical superiority of the enemy in France, where 162 Allied divisions now oppose 200 German divisions, is very heavy, and that as there is no possibility of British and French increasing the number of their divisions (on the contrary, they are put to extreme straits to keep them up) there is a great danger of the war being lost unless the numerical

inferiority of the Allies can be remedied as rapidly as possible by the advent of American troops. He therefore urges with utmost insistence that maximum possible number of infantry and machine guns, in which respects shortage of men on side of Allies is most marked, should continue to be shipped from America in months of June and July to avert the immediate danger of an Allied defeat in present campaign owing to Allied reserves being exhausted before those of the enemy.

In addition to this and looking to future he represents that it is impossible to foresee ultimate victory in the war unless America is able to provide such an army as will enable the Allies ultimately to achieve the necessary numerical superiority. He places the total American force required for this at no less than 100 divisions and urges continuous raising of fresh American levies which in his opinion should not be less than 300,000 a month, with a view to establishing a total American force of 100 divisions at as early a date as this can possibly be done.

We are satisfied that General Foch, who is conducting the present campaign with consummate ability and on whose military judgment we continue to place the most absolute reliance, is not overestimating the needs of the case and we feel confidence that the United States Government will do everything that can be done both to meet the needs of the immediate situation and to proceed with continuous raising of fresh levies calculated to provide as soon as possible the numerical superiority which Commander-in-Chief of Allied forces regards as essential to ultimate victory. . . .

CLEMENCEAU  
LLOYD GEORGE  
ORLANDO

'June 5, 1918: I had an important conversation,' wrote House, 'with Wiseman this morning. Lloyd George has sent

Lord Reading a cable signed by the Prime Ministers of England, France, and Italy, urging the President to send over a stated number of troops during June and July: 170,000 fighting men was the June estimate, and 140,000 the July estimate. The cable is an alarming one. . . . The President is willing to send troops without limit either as to number or as to time. . . . It is an indication that they now have arrived at some understanding with Pershing.

‘I have asked Sir William to write out a cable to send Lloyd George, in which he is to state that it was prepared after consultation with me. . . . Jusserand is to see the President at two o’clock and present the cable [of the Prime Ministers]. Wiseman is to telephone me the result later. . . .

‘Wiseman has just telephoned that Jusserand saw the President and he promised to send one hundred divisions of our troops over as soon as it was possible to do so. This means 2,700,000 men.’

Thus was American man-power to be transferred to the battle-front. The number of American troops which actually participated in the defensive warfare of June and July was not large, but the arrival of the troops in France was a guarantee that Allied reserves would not be exhausted, as the military leaders of the Entente feared. The American promise of March had been to send 480,000 in the four succeeding months. As it developed, close to a million were sent during those four months.<sup>1</sup> The agreement of June, which called for 250,000 a month, was surpassed; the monthly average from June to September inclusive was over 280,000.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> April . . . . .	118,642
May . . . . .	245,945
June . . . . .	278,664
July . . . . .	306,350
	<hr/> 949,601

Ayres, *The War with Germany*, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.



It was the general opinion in military circles that it would require at least another year of fighting to defeat Germany.<sup>1</sup> In fact, some felt that the final campaigns could not come before 1920. These were the days when it seemed wiser not to be optimistic, for the military situation demanded the courage of desperation. It was true that the gap between British and French armies before Amiens had been closed and the British had held firm in Flanders. But the German drive from the Chemin des Dames at the end of May had been victorious and in June the enemy again threatened Paris.

House hoped, nevertheless, that Allied victory might come sooner than the military leaders dared to believe. With the appointment of Foch as generalissimo and the American troops crossing the Atlantic in numbers, he felt that the worst crisis had been passed. He counted, furthermore, upon a break in Germany's morale as soon as it appeared clear that the offensive had been stopped, and upon the effect of President Wilson's speeches, which had sown distrust between German people and Government and stimulated the process of self-determination in Austria. He even dared to prophesy the overthrow of the German military leaders by autumn.

*Colonel House to the President*

MAGNOLIA, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 23, 1918

DEAR GOVERNOR:

... I notice that the Germans are saying it will be 1920 before we can have as many as a million men there [France]. We already have them and the German people should know it. I was under the impression, and Reading confirmed it, that we have sent men across the Atlantic more rapidly than the English have ever sent them across the Channel,<sup>2</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> Pershing to House, June 19, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> But more than half were carried in British ships.

shipping facilities of the Allies are increasing so rapidly that we can soon do even better.

England, France, and Italy need now constant stimulation and no one can do it so well as you. If their morale can be kept up until autumn, in my opinion our fight against Germany will be largely won. I believe Austria is already at the breaking point and I also believe the German people will take the supreme power from the military extremists this autumn, if they do not have a decisive victory on the Western Front. . . .

Affectionately yours

E. M. HOUSE

END OF VOLUME III











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